NEWS

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The darling of Marie Helvin and Jerry Hall. P17

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THE INDEPENDENT

Wednesday 11 February 1998 45p No 3,531

Never seen before: starting today, intimate and historic photographs from the private family albums of the Duke of Windsor

Revealed: the lost prince of the House of Windsor

By **John Lichfield** in Paris, and **Paul Vallely** in London

THIS IS the lost prince of the House of Windsor who, throughout his life, was hidden from the British public for fear he might embarrass the Royal Family. His photograph (right) has never been seen before in a newspaper. His name was Prince John, the uncle of the present Queen.

It is one of hundreds of previously unseen, priceless, old photographs of the Royal Family and the Duke and Duchess of Windsor's romance which have been discovered by *The Independent*. The photographs, many of them taken by the former Edward VIII himself, have lain in two albums in an attic in France for decades. One album chronicles, with an intimacy never previously seen, the private life of the Royal Family in the period just before the First World War. The second shows scenes from Edward's courtship of the then Mrs Wallis Simpson before his abdication in 1936.

The albums belong to a French family which was close to the Duke and Duchess of Windsor when they lived in France after 1945. They were given to the family by the Duchess as a memento of the Duke when he died in 1972.

The find was yesterday described as "remarkable and very exciting" by Michael Bloch, who edited the Duke and Duchess's letters and is the author of five books about them. "I have seen other volumes, but these are by far the most intimate," he added.

Publicity surrounding the New York sale of the Windsors' personal possessions from their home in Paris by Sotheby's next week led the French family to look at the albums again. They were advised by a British friend, and a reader of *The Independent*, to contact this newspaper. We intend to publish many of the most remarkable photographs over the coming days.

The pictures reveal private moments

Inside: The secret albums, pages 14 and 15

from the life of the Royals in the golden age before the Great War. But most singular are the pictures of the then Prince of Wales and Mrs Simpson lounging by the pool at Fort Belvedere, his country home in Berkshire. One album contains handwritten notes by the Duke with wry and affectionate references to "Papa", "Mama", "Self" and his brothers and sister.

A member of the French family which owns the albums, who was a little girl at the time, said: "I have wonderful memories of the Duke and Duchess. They had no children of their own and, for a few years, I became a little like their child, a surrogate daughter. They loved to play with me in the garden. Sometimes, if they arrived unexpectedly and I was at school, they would send the Rolls to collect me."

The family which owns the albums has asked not to be identified. But *The Independent* has checked out their story and believes it to be genuine.

"We thought that they were an important and beautiful historical document and something that we should share with other people. We want them to be revealed in a way which is worthy, not sensationalised. What we would like, from revealing some of them in *The Independent*, is for a British publisher to take an interest in publishing them."

The family member, who was a little girl at the time said last night: "I remember them as warm people, very down-to-earth people, very simple, very open. My parents and I would sometimes have tea with them in the big house and we would be treated just as if we were the grand people who used to come to receptions.

"I knew a little of their story. I knew that he had once been the King. But, for me, as a child, none of that really sank in I suppose. I thought of them only as kind, warm people, people who were very good to me."

Windsor sale, page 19

Prince John, in about 1913. The note is by the Prince of Wales, later the Duke of Windsor, who took the photograph

'Little Johnnie looked very peaceful ...'

By **Paul Vallely**

HE IS, in the photograph (right), an attractive and normal-looking boy. Yet Prince John, the fifth and youngest son of the Queen's grandfather, George V, was never allowed out in public. He was hidden even from friends of the family and guests to the King's home, York Cottage, on the Sandringham Estate, being housed in a separate building. His only playmates were his brothers and sisters, who demonstrated great affection for the boy. Until the publication of today's pictures, only one photograph of him was known to exist.

Prince John had epilepsy. At the beginning of the century, the disorder was considered untreatable. The fear of the royal circle was that the boy might have a fit in public. So he was hidden away. Shortly before his 13th birthday, the severity and frequency of his fits began to increase. Then one evening in 1919, his nurse, Lalla Bill, telephoned from the prince's segregated home at Wood Farm, Wolferton, and told his mother, Queen Mary, that the boy had fallen asleep after a serious fit and could not be woken.

The Queen and King motored down to Wood Farm. Later the Queen wrote in her diary: "Found poor Lalla very resigned but heartbroken. Little Johnnie looked very peaceful lying there." The death, she wrote "came as a great release". He was buried, "very privately", three days later in the graveyard at Sandringham Church.

Ministers hint at deal on Murdoch

By **Anthony Bevins**
Political Editor

THE IDEA that Rupert Murdoch was an "evil figure" who had to be curbed by legislation was rejected by the Prime Minister's official spokesman yesterday.

But he did not rule out the possibility of a compromise Commons amendment to the Competition Bill that could deal more precisely with the "problem" of newspaper price wars.

And Clive Soley, influential chairman of the Parliamentary Labour Party, suggested that the director-general of Fair Trading should be able to take action against any business selling its product at below-cost for more than six months. "It seems to me that one answer is not to focus on newspapers. Then it is no longer about competitive pricing," he told The *Independent*: "it is about screwing the market."

Given the fact that 24 members of the current government and 55 existing Labour MPs signed Commons motions attacking Mr Murdoch's price wars in 1994, the chances of such a compromise being accepted are strong – even though it would involve a retreat from the hard line so far taken by Lord Simon of Highbury, the competition minister in the Lords.

After the Lords passed an anti-Murdoch amendment to the Competition Bill on Monday night – with 23 rebel Labour peers defying a Government instruction to vote it down – No 10 yesterday launched a passionate attack on Mr Murdoch's critics.

The spokesman said that there was no question of the Government accepting the amendment when it came before the Commons. "This amendment will not become law," he said.

The amendment, sponsored by Lord McNally, a Liberal Democrat peer, and carried with a 28-vote majority, would specifically outlaw newspaper price cuts that threaten to "injure or eliminate" the competition.

It appeared that Tony Blair's hostility had been provoked by the fact that the amendment singled out the newspaper industry for special treatment – and put Mr Murdoch directly in its sights.

There is a widespread suspicion among senior ministers that the Prime Minister will not allow any action to be taken against Mr Murdoch, even indirectly. One senior government source has told *The Independent* that Mr Blair has issued a "hands-off" instruction to the Department of Trade and Industry.

But Mr Soley said: "We have to do something about the predatory price wars. Frankly, we are probably only months away from *The Independent* being destroyed, and then he [Mr Murdoch] will turn his guns on the *Daily Telegraph*. We have got to deal with it some way."

The Prime Minister's spokesman said: "The issue of predatory pricing is addressed in the Bill. There is a game in most of the media to suggest that Murdoch is this great evil figure."

As for the Lord amendment, he said: "It singles out one company in a way that is unnecessary and I think there is a lot of game-playing going on."

Lord McNally said yesterday that the present cut-price policy of the *Times* did not make sense unless it was to clear the field of two major competitors - *The Independent* and *Daily Telegraph*.

The courtship, page 6

Lords cannabis inquiry

By **Anthony Bevins**

A HIGH-POWERED investigation into the medical and recreational use of cannabis is to be launched by the House of Lords, with a report expected by the end of the year.

The breakthrough Westminster inquiry comes five months after the *Independent on Sunday* launched its decriminalise cannabis campaign. It marks the biggest step yet in the drive to relax the laws on the drug's use. To date, the Government has refused to allow a debate on the matter in the Commons, despite calls from backbench Labour MPs.

One factor in the Lords' decision was a report in November from the British Medical Association, urging Ministers to consider "changing the Misuse of Drugs Act to allow the prescription of cannabinoids [active chemical compounds in cannabis]to patients with certain conditions causing distress that are not adequately controlled by existing treatments."

The BMA plea came after the Lord Chief Justice, Lord Bingham, called for a debate on the issue, saying: "It is a subject that deserves, in my judgement, detached, objective, independent consideration."

Lord Bingham's urging will be met by the Lords Select Committeee investigation, to be chaired by Liberal Democrat peer Lord Perry of Walton, a former Professor of Pharmacology. The all-party investigation's terms of reference are thought to cover "the scientific case for and against relaxing the prohibition on the medical and recreational use of cannabis".

The inquiry is expected to start holding public hearings, with evidence from expert witnesses, after Easter, with a report that could be delivered in the Autumn.

INSIDE: WEATHER, P2 • CROSSWORDS, P30 AND EYE P10 • TODAY'S TELEVISION, EYE P12 • SPORT, P27-30 • GAZETTE, P18 • BUSINESS, P22-26 • FULL CONTENTS, P2

"More bodies found behind bank till."

At Abbey National, our staff don't take their lunch hour between 12.30 and 1.30. A little good news for the front page.

ABBEY NATIONAL
Because life's complicated enough.

P29

Abbey National, the Umbrella Couple symbol and 'Because life's complicated enough' are trademarks of Abbey National plc, Abbey House, Baker Street, London, NW1 6XL, United Kingdom.

Round the world UK yacht loses mast

By Stewart Alexander
in Auckland

Disaster struck the British entry in the Whitbread Round The World Race yesterday when Lawrie Smith's *Silk Cut* was dismasted nearly 2,000 miles from Cape Horn. In the black of an Antarctic night, sailing fast in big, cold seas, it broke at its halfway point and came crashing down.

It was the second, heart-stopping problem in 30 minutes. First, the yacht had reported hitting what it thought was a growler, or semi-submerged iceberg, stripping a six foot by one inch layer of skin off the forward section of the hull on the starboard side.

The yacht was about halfway from Auckland to Cape Horn and being battered by high winds and big seas when the accident occurred.

Smith reported to race headquarters that the top half of the mast had broken off while they were blasting along in winds of 30 knots.

He said the crew were all safe and uninjured and there was probably enough of the mast still standing to be able to set up a rig to get them to the west coast of South America, which would involve cutting the sails down to fit the shortened mast and proceeding at a reduced speed.

The yacht asked for no support from the emergency services, nor for help from any of the other eight competitors in what is one of the most desolate and wild sections of the world's oceans.

Smith had been under considerable pressure to produce a big result on this fifth leg of the race, from Auckland to Sao Sebastiao in Brazil. Lying a disappointing seventh overall, he had said he needed a win to drag the big-budget campaign back into the reckoning.

So far, the highlight of his race has been setting a world record of 449.1 miles in 24 hours, on an earlier leg.

Yesterday Smith said: "We were moving steadily in about 28 to 30 knots (of wind), when there was a bang out of nowhere, and as the guys on deck looked up they saw the mast break. The surprising thing was that the break did not occur coming off a surf, but just at a random moment when nothing was really happening - we had the same rig up for several hours in a moderate breeze.

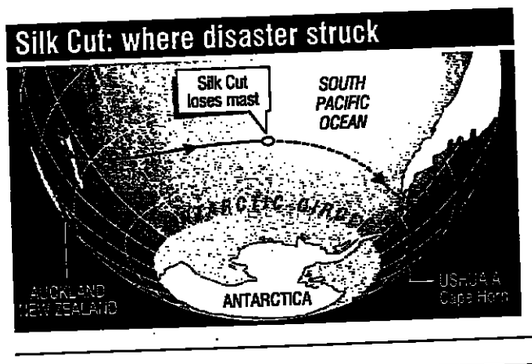
"We are assessing options at the moment. We currently intend to sail under jury rig to Ushuaia in the Beagle Channel, just inside Cape Horn, pick up diesel, and motor north, perhaps all the way to Sao Sebastiao, to take the new rig."

As frantic conversations were held with all the support services ashore, which are mainly in England, the project manager, Howard Gibbons, who is still in Auckland, said it was unlikely they would try to fly a new rig to either Ushuaia or Punta Arenas, as the airport facilities were unsuitable. Instead, the Southampton-based firm Peters & May were investigating the possibility of shipping the spare mast and rigging from Lymington to Santos, in Brazil, and replacing it there.

As well as picking up diesel, the yacht would be able to take on extra food, and it has its own desalination plant to make fresh water from salt.

Lost cause: Lawrie Smith's *Silk Cut*, which had been under pressure to produce a creditable result on the current leg, but ran out of luck 2,000 miles from Cape Horn when the mast broke.

Silk Cut: where disaster struck



Bronze Age link to first saunas

By Andrew Buncombe

Keep-fit fanatics enjoy one after a work-out in the gym, the Finnish accompany one with a thrashing with a piece of birch and the Romans, somewhat typically, decadently whiled away hours enjoying their pleasures.

But, according to an archaeologist from North Yorkshire, it may have Bronze Age man who first hit upon the idea of the sauna.

Tim Laurie believes that Bronze Age man may have enjoyed nothing better than a good sweat in the sauna after a day's hunting. The amateur archaeologist has discovered 64 mounds in the Yorkshire Dales which he says are the remains of prehistoric steam baths and which date between 1000BC and 1500BC.

As well as hot baths, the ancient people would have used "dry" sweathouses made from sticks and animal skin, which they filled with hot rocks, he believes.

For a bath or sauna, rocks would be placed on a fire before being rolled into troughs which could also have doubled as cooking pots for large kills such as deer and pig.

Mr Laurie said that 100 gallons of water could have been heated to boiling point using heated stones.

All the mounds, ranging from 8 to 15 metres across and 1.5 metres high, are near moorland springs, which may also have been used as places of worship. "In pre-history a hot bath would have been really appreciated," said Mr Laurie. "They had few pleasures and this was one of them.

"For those not well or with rheumatism, a hot bath would make them feel a lot better. I believe these mounds were bathing places, perhaps medicinal, and for cleansing."

Mr Laurie also said they could have been used "après-hunt" for those who had been in search of game over rough country.

TOMORROW

EDUCATION +
The 13-year-old who goes to school *and* university

FASTTRACK
University sweethearts: can they survive?

DESIGN
The end of the gas guzzle?

THE EYE
From the baggage reclaim to stardom: the docu-soap legend

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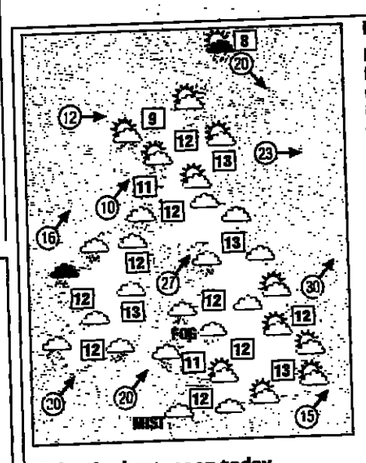
NEWSPAPERS SUPPORT RECYCLING
Recycled paper made up 41.4% of the raw material for UK newspapers in the first half of 1997.

WEATHER



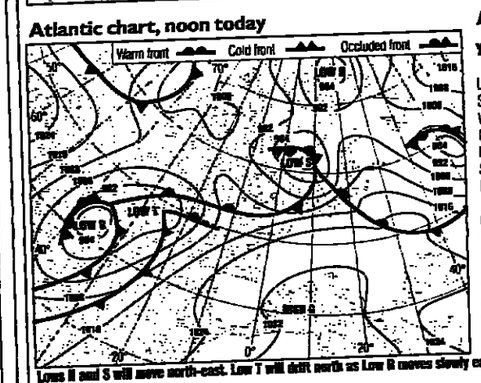
Noon today

Rain over Scotland and Northern Ireland will be heavy for a time but it will ease as the strong south to south-west wind eases. It is going to stay cloudy and drizzly in the west but eastern Scotland should brighten up for a time. Any drizzle over northern and western parts of England and Wales will die away but it will stay rather cloudy. The east and south will brighten up more readily, with spells of sunshine breaking through, and it will be mild everywhere.

Outlook for the next few days

Little change. It will stay very mild for February, especially in the east, where the best of any sunshine will be. Most places will be dry and bright but western and northern areas are going to be cloudier. Rain and strong winds will return to Northern Ireland and Scotland. On Saturday cooler weather will spread across the UK from the north but it does not look like turning wintry over the weekend and temperatures will recover again on Sunday.

Atlantic chart, noon today



Lows H and S will move north-east. Low T will drift north as Low G moves slowly east. High G remains almost stationary.

Air quality

Yesterday's readings

	NO_2	SO_2
London	Moderate	Good
S England	Moderate	Good
Wales	Good	Good
C England	Moderate	Good
N England	Good	Good
Scotland	Good	Good
N Ireland	Good	Good

Outlook for today

London	Moderate	Good
S England	Moderate	Good
Wales	Good	Good
C England	Moderate	Good
N England	Moderate	Good
Scotland	Good	Good
N Ireland	Good	Good

British Isles weather

most recent available figure at noon local time
C,cloudy; Cl,clear; F,fair; Fg,fog; Hz,haze; M,mist; R,rain; S,sunny; Sl,sleet; Sh,showers; Sn,snow; Th,thunder

Aberdeen	C	9	48	Bristol	C	11	52	Guernsey	C	9	48
Anglesey	R	9	48	Cardiff	C	10	50	Inverness	C	8	46
Ayr	C	8	46	Carlisle	C	10	50	Ipswich	C	11	52
Belfast	C	8	46	Dover	C	9	48	Isles of Scilly	C	11	52
Birmingham	C	11	52	Dublin	R	9	48	Jersey	C	9	48
Blackpool	Dr	7	45	Edinburgh	C	9	48	Liverpool	Dr	9	48
Bournemouth	C	11	52	Exeter	C	12	54	London	C	12	54
Brighton	C	9	48	Glasgow	Sh	9	48	Manchester	D	11	52
Newcastle	C	8	46
Oxford	C	11	52
Plymouth	C	10	50
Scarborough	C	8	46
Southampton	C	11	52
Southend	C	11	52
Stornoway	C	8	43
York	C	10	50

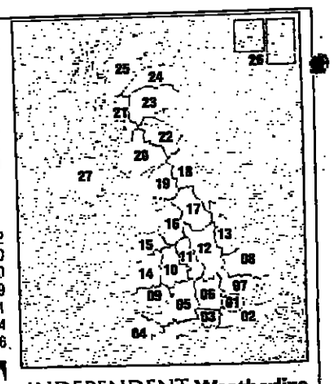
High tides

	AM	HT	PM	HT
London	01·47	7.0	14.09	7.1
Liverpool	11·21	9.2	23 40	9.1
Avonmouth	07.15	12 9	19·39	12.9
Hull (Albert Dock)	06·24	8.2	18·34	8.5
Greenock	00:39	3.1	12·32	3.4
Dun Laoghaire	11.40	4.2	23:56	3.9

Height measured in metres

Lighting-up times

Belfast	17 23	to	07.52
Birmingham	17.12	to	07 30
Bristol	17.18	to	07 30
Glasgow	17.12	to	07 49
London	17.08	to	07.21
Manchester	17.11	to	07.34
Newcastle	17 04	to	07.36



Sun & moon

Sun rises	07 22	Sun sets	17 08
Moon rises	17 27	Moon sets	07 13
Full Moon: Today			

INDEPENDENT Weatherline
For the latest forecasts dial **0891 5009** followed by the two digits for your area indicated by the above map.
Source: The Met Office. Calls charged at 50p per min at all times (inc VAT).

Out and about with AA Roadwatch

Call **0336 401777** for the latest local and national traffic news. Source: The Automobile Association. Calls charged at 50p per min at all times (inc VAT)

World weather

most recent available figure at noon local time

Akrotiri	F	14	57	Chicago	M	1	34	Lima	F	29	84
Alexandria	F	17	63	Christchurch	F	19	66	Lisbon	C	14	57
Algiers	F	20	68	Cologne	S	11	52	Locarno	S	7	45
Alicante	C	15	59	Copenhagen	M	6	43	Los Angeles	F	14	57
Amsterdam	C	10	50	Corfu	S	12	54	Luxembourg	S	8	46
Anchorage	C	-3	27	Dakar	F	25	77	Madrid	C	11	52
Athens	F	11	52	Darwin	F	31	88	Majorca	F	18	61
Auckland	F	27	81	Dhahran	S	24	75	Malaga	C	15	59
Bahrain	S	24	75	Faro	C	16	61	Malta	C	13	55
Bangkok	F	33	91	Florence	S	10	50	Manila	C	31	88
Barbados	F	29	84	Frankfurt	S	6	43	Mecca	S	27	81
Barcelona	F	14	57	Funchal	C	18	64	Melbourne	S	28	82
Beirut	C	12	54	Geneva	S	7	45	Mexico City	S	22	72
Belgrade	C	8	46	Gibraltar	R	14	57	Miami	S	16	61
Berlin	C	8	48	Harare	C	25	77	Milan	S	11	52
Bermuda	F	19	66	Helsinki	Dr	3	37	Mombasa	C	33	91
Biarritz	S	16	61	Hong Kong	C	23	73	Montreal	S	-6	23
Bogota	F	18	64	Honolulu	F	27	81	Moscow	C	0	32
Bombay	S	34	93	Islamabad	na			Munich	S	8	46
Bordeaux	S	14	57	Istanbul	F	7	45	Nairobi	C	24	75
Brisbane	F	27	81	Jakarta	F	30	86	Naples	S	13	55
Brussels	S	9	48	Jeddah	S	26	79	Nassau	S	19	66
Bucharest	M	-1	30	Jerusalem	C	18	64	New Delhi	F	21	70
Budapest	F	10	50	Jo'burg	S	25	77	New Orleans	C	15	59
Buenos Aires	C	26	79	Karachi	S	30	86	New York	S	4	39
Cairo	C	16	61	Kathmandu	S	17	63	Nice	S	14	57
Calgary	C	6	43	Kiev	C	2	36	Nicosia	C	15	59
Cape Town	S	31	88	Kingston	F	28	82	Oslo	S	9	48
Caracas	F	30	86	Kuala Lumpur	C	35	95	Paris	C	10	50
Casablanca	C	18	64	Las Palmas	S	22	72	Peking	S	3	37
Perth	S	34	93	Prague	S	10	50
Port Stanley	Sh	8	46	Reykjavik	F	-3	27
Rhodes	S	14	57	Rio de Jan	F	33	91
Riyadh	F	20	68	Rome	S	12	54
Salzburg	C	9	48	Santiago	F	27	81
Sao Paulo	F	10	50	Seoul	S	-2	28
Singapore	F	32	90	Stockholm	C	8	46
Strasbourg	S	12	54	Sydney	Dr	21	70
T'aipei	C	19	66	Tel Aviv	C	16	61
Tenerife	S	21	70	Tokyo	C	4	39
Toronto	S	1	34	Tunis	C	15	59
Valencia	C	14	57	Vancouver	C	10	50
Venice	S	9	48	Vienna	F	7	45
Warsaw	S	8	46	Washington	S	8	43
Wellington	C	19	66	Zurich	C	7	45

HEARTS JOINED, PROPOSALS MADE AND VOWS RENEWED. THIS SATURDAY AT HARRODS.

If two things were destined to be together this Valentine's day, it's you and Harrods. Choose from seven floors of gifts ranging from the traditional, such as fine Belgian chocolates and floral bouquets, to the more extravagant, like a Chopard Love Ring from our Fine Jewellery Room. Or you could choose to treat your Valentine to a romantic meal. Heart-shaped salmon parcels with oysters in the Sea Grill perhaps, or a special Valentine's banquet at the Georgian Restaurant. So this Saturday say those three special little words your loved one has been dying to hear. Let's visit Harrods.

Harrods KNIGHTSBRIDGE

Harrods Ltd., Knightsbridge, London SW1X 7XL. Tel: 0171-730 1234.

WILLIAM HARTSTON
WEATHER WISE

Why are the British not campaigning vigorously for snowballing to be included in the Winter Olympics? As yesterday's *Independent* reported on the front page, the organisers in Nagano are having many problems with snow. First they were worried about having too little, now they have too much, and it's a nasty wet snow that cannot be cleared by mechanical blowers.

So the wrong sort of snow for the Japanese is exactly the right sort of snow for British Rail. In Britain snow generally falls when the temperature is within two degrees of zero Celsius. The right conditions for snow demand warm air – which supplies the moisture – as well as cold, which freezes it for long enough to prevent its falling as rain. Most commonly, especially in the south-east of the country, the moist air arrives from the west or south-west, while the chilling component comes from the north or east.

We have had very little snow so far this winter because it has been either too warm for snowflakes to survive their fall to the ground, or too cold for the warm, moist air to get close enough. When snow does fall under close-to-zero conditions, salting or gritting will melt it by introducing impurities that lower the freezing-point of the water that forms it. The same treatment has little effect on the less common, but not exceptionally unusual, very cold, powdery snow that sometimes blows in from the east – as with the notorious "wrong sort of snow" that so frustrated British Rail in the second week of February 1991. Such powdery snow is also the wrong sort for snowballs. They do not have the moisture necessary to cohere, and just fall apart in your hand – or down a companion's neck if you get close enough.

So a powerful case may be made for including snowballs in the Olympics. First, it would give the Japanese a perfect way to incorporate the unwanted wet snow into the competitive programme, thereby getting rid of vast handfuls of the stuff in a useful way. Second, a properly conducted snowball fight – between teams or individuals – could combine the elegance of, say, fencing, with the strength and technique of shot-putting.

Finally, it is, unlike almost everything else in the Winter Olympics, something the British could do well at. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* the word "snowball" dates back to the very beginning of the 15th century. Six hundred years of continuous practice would surely give us a head start.

هكذا من الأصل

هكذا من الأصل

British actresses dominate the list for prestigious Oscar awards

Dame Judi Dench: Remark put her off acting in films

By David Lister
Arts News Editor

DAME JUDI Dench, 63, was yesterday nominated for her first Oscar for her role as Queen Victoria in the film *Mrs Brown*. She joins Helena Bonham Carter, Julie Christie and Kate Winslet in securing four of the five Best Actress nominations for Britain.

Expressing her surprise and delight last night, Dame Judi told how she had been put off acting in films for years after a director turned her down for a part long ago. "This director said. 'You have everything wrong with your face,'" she recalled. "And I never got over it."

She refused to name the director, saying he was still alive.

Dame Judi said she didn't know yet whether she would be given time off from her role in David Hare's play *Amy's View* in the West End of London to attend the Oscars ceremony. It would be a foreign and totally new experience for her, she added, as she had never even watched the ceremony on television.

However, she was "dreadfully disappointed" that her co-star Billy Connolly had not been nominated. And she told how, when they were making the BBC film about Queen Victoria and her ghillie John Brown in Scotland they were under the impression that they were making a film for television. It was scheduled to be shown last Easter, but the head of Miramax saw it and said Miramax would distribute it as a feature film instead. It has already grossed $14m (£8.75m).

The Best Actor category this year is dominated by veterans Jack Nicholson, Dustin Hoffman, Peter Fonda and Robert Duvall, who are facing youth competition from newcomer Matt Damon.

The British actor Sir Anthony Hopkins, who won an Oscar for *The Silence of the Lambs* in 1992, is nominated for his supporting role in Steven Spielberg's controversial slave epic *Amistad*.

But it is in the Best Actress category that Britain has excelled. Helena Bonham Carter received her accolade for her role in the *Wings Of The Dove*, while Dame Judi was rewarded for her part in *Mrs Brown*.

Julie Christie's performance in the film *Afterglow* and Kate Winslet's in the blockbuster *Titanic* were the roles which won them their entries on the prestigious list. The remaining place goes to Helen Hunt for her part in the multi-nominated *As Good As It Gets*.

The *Full Monty* is the only British entry in the category for Best Picture. The comedy about a group of unemployed Sheffield steelworkers who turn to stripping is against *As Good As It Gets*, *Good Will Hunting*, *LA Confidential*, and *Titanic*.

Peter Cattaneo, the *Full Monty's* director, has also been nominated for the best director category, while writer Simon Beaufoy has been listed for his screenplay.

The adaptation of the Henry James novel *The Wings Of The Dove* also earns a writing nomination. Hossein Amini has been shortlisted in the category for best adapted screenplay. It is also nominated for best costume design by Sandy Powell and best cinematography by Eduardo Serra.

Helena Bonham Carter said she was in a daze over her first Oscar nomination.

"Deep down I'm jubilant, but I'm feeling a bit incoherent when I'm instantly required to say something. I'm taking in plenty of caffeine," she said.

She added: "For any screen actor it's a dream come true to be nominated. In practical terms it means your price goes up, you get a bigger choice of parts and the most exciting thing is you get glory, acclaim and peer group approval."

Helena Bonham Carter: 'Deep down I'm jubilant'

Champagne goes flat as bankers' bloodbath begins

By Lea Paterson

DESPITE the talk of a return to a 1980s-style boom, the champagne in the bars around two of the City of London's biggest banks has a decidedly flat taste this week.

Over the next few days, 3,000 workers at UBS and SBC, two leading Swiss banks, are expected to be made redundant following their £15bn merger. The sackings are expected to start on Thursday or Friday.

Morale is particularly low at UBS, which is widely expected to bear the brunt of the cuts. UBS employees, many of whom earn more than £100,000 a year, variously described the working atmosphere yesterday as "grim", "appalling" and "frustrating".

"It's what you'd expect really, pretty bad," said one down-hearted employee, drowning his sorrows with a glass or two of Chablis in a local wine bar.

Some commentators reckon as few as one in 10 current UBS employees will remain with the bank after the redundancies, although the exact number of job cuts is unlikely to be known before the end of next week. Between them, the two banks employ about 7,000 people in London.

The handling of the redundancy programme has created bitterness and resentment amongst UBS employees, many of whom believe they have been the subject of discrimination.

At the time of the merger announcement, Marcel Ospel, SBC's chief executive and chief executive-designate of the new bank, told UBS employees he would pick the best staff from the two banks to serve under him in the new company. However, UBS managers have lost out in the race for top jobs, and numerous, highly-rated UBS employees are expected issued with their P45s in the coming weeks.

One employee said: "Frankly, I think its outrageous. UBS has some great businesses. I think its very sad that some of these will not be taken into the new bank".

Despite the uncertainty over their future, there has been no mass defection of staff from the banks since the merger was announced in December. "People are hanging on for their redundancy cheques and their bonuses," said one UBS source yesterday.

One leading City headhunter yesterday confirmed his firm had had enquiries from numerous UBS employees and had managed to place several. However, not all staff can expect to be so fortunate.

Ron Bradley, managing director of Jonathan Wren search and selection, said yesterday that experienced front-office staff should have little difficulty securing another job. "However, back-office staff, particularly those in clerical roles, could well find it difficult", he added.

Although redundancy terms are yet to be finalised, proposals have been circulated to staff at both banks. SBC employees are expected to receive a minium of three months' pay, plus an extra month for each year of service. An analyst who has been at the bank three years and earns £100,000, for example, stands to net £50,000. Redundancy terms at UBS are understood to be similar, although over-40s are likely to receive slightly better terms.

One well-paid banker said yesterday: "I think the terms are rather acceptable. I shall be quite disappointed if I don't get made redundant now".

Bonuses provide staff with another incentive to tough it out until the bitter end. UBS staff have already been provided with details of their annual bonuses – described by one insider as "pretty good" – but these will be forfeited if employees quit of their own accord before the end of the month. SBC staff will not be told what their annual bonuses will be until next month.

Most employees have a reasonable idea of who will be staying and who will be going. Key employees have already been offered jobs in the new bank, and many of the staff who have yet to receive an offer believe they will be looking for another employer in the weeks to come.

Uncertainty over the unit's future is understood to have hit business at key departments at UBS. "Staff in some areas are simply sitting there with nothing to do," said one source.

Another said: "Put it this way, if you want to take a long lunch or go and chat to some headhunters, nobody will make a fuss. Things are pretty quiet".

Morale at UBS is particularly low as the bank is due to bear the brunt of cuts Photograph: Andrew Buurman

De Niro quizzed over vice ring

By John Lichfield, Paris

FRENCH police yesterday questioned the American film star Robert de Niro in connection with their investigation of a high class prostitution ring.

The actor was taken from the Bristol Hotel, close to the Elysée Palace, where he was staying during the shooting of a film in Paris. Police sources refused to say why they thought that de Niro could help with the inquiry. They stressed that he had not been arrested.

Five people have already been placed under formal investigation in a 15-month inquiry which has revealed a call-girl network with tentacles around the globe. The clientele is reported to include Saudi princes and other Gulf potentates.

Several witnesses gave details last year of the brokering of a $1m sexual encounter in the South of France between an unidentified American actress and a member of a Gulf royal family.

The French government originally placed a brake on the investigation, apparently for fear of harming sales of arms to the Middle East. But the Socialist government which took power last June has freed the inquiry from these shackles.

The inquiry led to the arrest in January last year of a Swedish former model, Annika Brumark, the apparent head of the network. Other arrests included a photographer, Jean-Pierre Bourgeois, and a Lebanese businessman called Nazihabdulatis Al Ladki.

Investigators seized diaries, records and address books. Mr Al Ladki also revealed the names of other alleged clients, including Saudi princes. Several witnesses spoke of the arrangement of a rendezvous at a palace in the South of France between a Gulf prince and an American actress, who was paid $1m for her services. Rumours of such a meeting had circulated for years but they are now being taken seriously by the French police.

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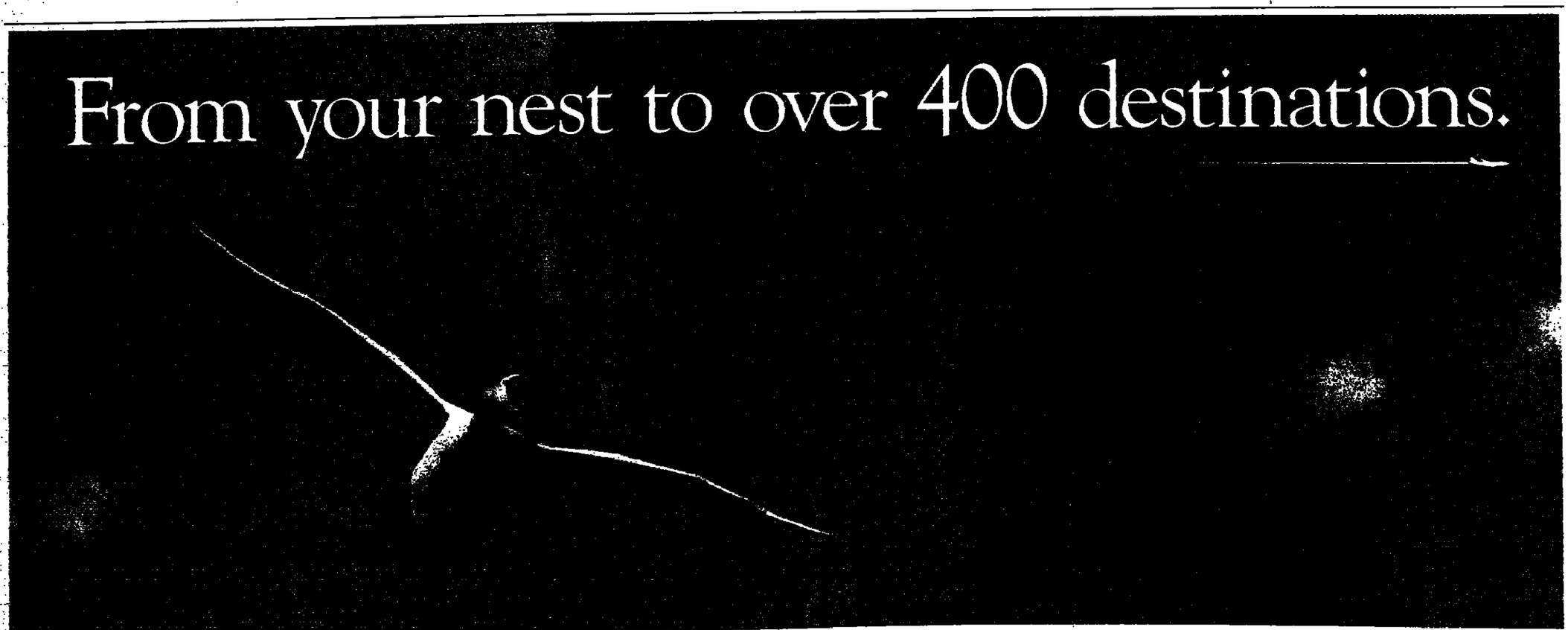

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Your mortgage and savings working together.

The Rossi family find the two go hand-in-hand like spaghetti and meatballs.

Cambridge restaurateurs, Gino and Daniella Rossi have recently switched to a new Bank of Scotland Personal Choice Mortgage. By combining their savings with the mortgage, they are benefiting from a huge saving in the interest they are paying on their mortgage.

Combining your mortgage with your savings? That might sound like an unusual concept, but consider it for a moment and you'll realise what perfect sense it makes.

Higher interest on borrowings than savings

Most of us have come to accept the fact that we pay a higher rate of interest on our borrowings than we receive for our savings.

At the moment, for example, the standard variable mortgage rate is substantially higher than what you're likely to be earning on your savings in a building society. You may then even have to pay tax on the interest on those savings.

Save money by paying less interest

Quite simply, Personal Choice is designed to make the difference between the lending and savings rates work in your favour. It's effectively a savings account that pays the same rate of interest as your mortgage.

Working on the principle that it is more cost effective for you to pay off debt than to save money, it follows that you will make the most of your savings by using them to reduce the interest you pay on your mortgage.

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Flexible mortgage

Now this might sound like a complicated notion, but as long as the mortgage is flexible enough to give you access to your savings when you need them then, in practice, there isn't much of a difference from the way you've always done things. Except, of course, you'll have more money.

Like our friends, the Rossi family. Over the years, they had saved up £10,000 in the Building Society to help their daughter, Maria, pay her way through university.

Instant Access

When they heard about the new Bank of Scotland Personal Choice Mortgage, they were struck by the advantages and switched immediately.

In effect, they had paid off £10,000 of their mortgage overnight, but the great thing is that those savings are still available to them as soon as Maria needs them. Only last week, in fact, they wrote a cheque for £700 to pay for a deposit on her student accommodation.

So simple

"It did take me a short while to get my head round the idea of this new mortgage," admits Gino, "but the funny thing is it's actually so simple. The most amazing thing is that even though our savings are helping to keep the interest payments down on the mortgage, they are actually even more accessible than they were in the building society. We even have a cheque book that comes with the account."

So how exactly does the Personal Choice Mortgage work? As we've explained, the basic principle is that your savings are used to reduce the interest you pay on your mortgage.

Maximise your savings

When you pay in additional lump sum payments of £500 or more, interest is recalculated on the reduced mortgage balance so you make immediate interest savings. Even with regular monthly overpayments, the balance on which interest is calculated is reduced at the end of each month. You can then access those funds any time you like by using a cheque book which is provided.

With no notice period or interest penalties, this is just as easy as withdrawing money from your old savings account. You will have exactly the same security from your savings as you would have with them in a separate account.

No tax on savings interest

If you don't need to withdraw the money, then it stays in the account working harder than ever. But, unlike a conventional savings account, you won't have to pay tax on the interest.

A Personal Choice Mortgage also gives you the flexibility to choose how much you pay monthly as a regular mortgage payment. You can opt to pay more each month or less when you need to.*

A mortgage with payment holidays

You can even choose to take a payment holiday of up to six months* or, alternatively, pay over 10 months, instead of 12 each year, giving you the chance to keep a better control over your finances at difficult times of the year such as Christmas or when you splash out for your holidays.

Although, it has to be said that the payment holiday option wasn't of great interest to Gino and Daniella Rossi at present. Not after another successful year with those spicy meatballs going down better than ever in their restaurant!

IND/11.2

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Sellafield scare over radioactive pigeons

By Ian Burrell

A RADIATION scare is underway at the nuclear reprocessing plant at Sellafield after more than 150 pigeons that were living nearby were found to be highly radioactive.

Urgent analysis of the dead birds is being carried out by scientists from British Nuclear Fuels (BNFL), which runs the plant, to try and determine how the contamination took place.

The birds had been taken for testing at Sellafield, Cumbria, last Friday by an inspector from the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. He had earlier been called to a pigeon sanctuary run by twins Jane and Barrie Robinson, in Seascale, after being asked to carry out a cull of 152 pigeons from the Robinsons' flock of around 700 birds, after complaints from other villagers that they were a health hazard.

He was worried by local rumours that the pigeons were radioactive – because they roosted at the reprocessing plant – and took them for analysis.

A BNFL spokeswoman said that the dead birds were tested for radiation in a series of batches and significant levels of radiation were found in each.

She said last night: "It is being taken extremely seriously. We have had several meetings today and top managers have been pulled out of other things to attend. We are very concerned at the health and hygiene implications of this."

BNFL scientists yesterday carried out further tests on the dead birds and at the pigeon sanctuary. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food will carry out independent tests. The BNFL spokeswoman said: "What we are trying to do is differentiate between the levels on the feathers and in the flesh. That will help us to discover whether it was something they picked up or if it was something they had eaten."

The RSPCA inspector was also given radiation tests but was told by BNFL that he was not in danger. But the RSPCA said last night that in future its inspectors would wear protective clothing when handling birds in the Sellafield area.

The residents of Seascale have long been concerned that they are exposed to dangerous levels of radiation from Sellafield. As long ago as 1983 it was claimed in a television documentary – *The Nuclear Laundry* – that local people suffered a disproportionately high risk of developing childhood leukaemia. Subsequent scientific tests into the so-called leukaemia clusters have been inconclusive.

Last week, the Channel 4 programme Mark Thomas Comedy Product contained an item reporting that seagull droppings taken from a local beach contained traces of radioactive isotopes.

The Cumbrians Opposed to a Radioactive Environment campaign accused BNFL of not doing enough to warn the public about two recent accidents at Sellafield involving radioactive material. Martin Forwood, the campaign co-ordinator, said contaminated pigeons could pose a risk to local people. "The National Radiological Protection Board say there is no dose of radiation below which there is no risk," he said.

Last night Jane Robinson, 54, said that BNFL officials had visited her at the Singing Surf pigeon sanctuary yesterday and culled a further 200 birds, which were taken away for testing.

Below the belt: Jane Couch claims the British boxing authorities are being discriminatory in refusing her a licence — Photograph: Martin Chainey

Welterweight champion faces her biggest fight yet – to knock discrimination out of the ring

By Barrie Clement
Labour Editor

Jane Couch, currently the women's world welterweight boxing champion, is about to face her toughest fight yet.

Ms Couch, 29, is taking the British Boxing Board of Control to an industrial tribunal in Croydon tomorrow for refusing her a licence to fight professionally in this country.

The "Fleetwood Assassin" as she is known, argues that the board is breaching equal opportunities legislation by preventing her from earning a living.

She will claim that its reasons for keeping her out of the professional ring are "stereotypical" and not based on any individual assessment of her capability.

Sara Lesley, her solicitor, pointed out last night that one of the seven grounds given for refusing the licence is that women suffer from pre-menstrual tension, which makes them "emotionally unstable and prone to accidents". Ms Lesley said the board has never examined Ms Couch to assess her individual suitability.

Other reasons put forward by the board are that women boxers might unknowingly be in the early stages of pregnancy and that some medical authorities contend that blows to the breast can cause lumps which may later turn malignant.

A born street-fighter – Ms Couch has been known to lay out men who have paid her unwanted attention – she started boxing three years ago after seeing a television documentary about female fighters.

The 10-stone 5ft 7in boxer won her world crown by comprehensively defeating reigning champion Sandra Geiger in Copenhagen in May last year.

Her solicitor conceded that many people found the idea of women boxers distasteful. "But we are not addressing the moral argument, we are simply trying to assert her right to earn a living," she said. If Ms Couch did not win her right to fight professionally, she would be forced to move to America.

Kamlesh Bahl, chairwoman of the Equal Opportunities Commission which is backing the boxer's case, said Ms Couch had proved her ability by winning the world championship. "More and more women wish to exercise their choice to take parts in all sports at all levels," she said.

Anger as ice-cream killers are returned to jail

By Louise Jury

Two men jailed for the Glasgow Ice Cream War killings then released pending appeal were returned to jail yesterday amid tumultuous scenes in court.

Thomas "TC" Campbell and Joseph Steele looked shocked when the Lord Justice Clerk Lord Cullen rejected their appeal at Edinburgh High Court, which was heard before television cameras.

Both men had been jailed for life in 1984 after being found guilty of setting fire to a house in Glasgow which belonged to an ice-cream van driver.

Six people died in the blaze which it was claimed related to a war for control of the ice-cream business in the city's East End.

But Campbell, 45, and Steele, 36, both protested their innocence. Steele has twice escaped from jail to make his case.

In August 1996, the Secretary of State referred the cases back to appeal. Bail was granted, which is unusual unless the appeal is considered virtually certain to succeed..

Outside court yesterday, Steele's 15-year-old son, John Paul, shouted: "They've given me back my dad for a year and now they are taking him away from me again."

Shop adverts warning

Supermarkets were warned yesterday to rein in the claims they make about each other's prices by the advertising watchdog.

Sainsbury, Asda, Tesco and Safeway all have complaints about each other's adverts in the latest bulletin from the Advertising Standards Authority. Only one complaint against Tesco has been upheld, and the ASA is warning shops to check their facts before launching an attack on their rivals.

It also warns them to take care that goods they compare with competition are not short-term offers.

— *Paul McCann*

Not guilty

A garage owner accused of involvement in the 1996 London Docklands bombing was cleared yesterday by a judge at the Old Bailey.

Mr Justice Blofeld directed the jury to find Patrick McKinley not guilty after deciding there was insufficient evidence. Mr McKinley, 34, was alleged to have played an important role in converting a lorry into a bomb transporter.

Dancer lied

A ballerina who spent years in a wheelchair smashed up her flat and blamed it on vandals when she regained use of her legs and had a breakdown.

Danielle Haskell, 34, admitted to Oldham magistrates criminal damage and wasting police time, receiving a four-month suspended sentence for the latter and three two-month suspended sentences for the former.

Green ban

Landowners have been stopped from harming wildlife-rich habitat with Britain's first ever Special Nature Conservation Order. Carol Goodwin and Timothy Birchenough had started digging on their land near Buxton. This moorland is important for the breeding of golden plover and snipe.

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For power users the 233-2 system with Intel Pentium II processor includes a massive 6.4Gb hard drive, 64Mb RAM, 56K modem, ATI AGP x2 graphics as well as the Epson 300 printer. The highest spec and most popular 233M-2 system provides the highest performance and also includes a PC-TV card with Teletext, top games and a higher spec Epson 400 colour printer.

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D11

How Murdoch's courtship of Blair paid off

By Fran Abrams
and Anthony Bevins

Sea-change: Rupert Murdoch, once reviled by Labour, whom Tony Blair flew halfway round the world to visit on an island off the Australian coast

In July 1995, Tony Blair flew half way round the world to cement his relationship with Rupert Murdoch at a News Corporation conference. Introducing him, the media tycoon joked: "If the British press is to be believed, today is all part of a Blair-Murdoch flirtation. If that flirtation is ever consummated, Tony, I suspect we will end up making love like two porcupines - very carefully."

A year earlier few Labour MPs would have believed such a scene was possible. In fact, in July 1995 the shadow financial secretary to the treasury, Alistair Darling, sponsored a Commons motion condemning a newspaper price-cutting campaign by Mr Murdoch. "The newspaper industry is not only an important business but also a vital organ of the democratic process ... predatory pricing, with the intention of forcing rivals out of the market, will reduce choice and undermine competition," it said before calling on the Conservative government to prevent the practice. No fewer than 81 Labour MPs signed the motion. Among them was Nigel Griffiths, who as Competition Minister could now be expected to take the Competition Bill through the Commons and to lead the government defence of Mr Murdoch's price cuts. A week earlier, a separate motion signed by 59 MPs said the price-cutting battle would lead to "fewer titles, fewer jobs, less choice for readers and a further dangerous concentration of ownership." One signatory was Peter Mandelson, now Minister without Portfolio and a friend of Elisabeth Murdoch, the tycoon's daughter.

Altogether 24 ministers in the current government and 55 MPs still in the Commons backed one or both of the critical motions. When the MPs signed they had no inkling that Mr Blair, who was to become Labour leader that month, was about to end eight years' enmity between his party and Mr Murdoch. Labour boycotted News International titles for a year after the move to Wapping in 1986 that led to the dismissal of 5,000 print workers.

In 1992 Murdoch's flagship *Sun* claimed it had scuppered Labour's election chances by suggesting that if Neil Kinnock won, the last person to leave Britain should turn the lights out. The day after the election, it boasted: "It was the *Sun* wot won it!"

Even before he became leader, Mr Blair met Mr Murdoch at a dining club in Belgravia. It was reported the tycoon was impressed by the politician's "puppy-dog, youthful, company-lawyer image."

Once Mr Blair was elected, things moved quickly. Mr Murdoch gave an interview to *Der Spiegel* magazine in which he mused: "Last year we helped the Labour government in Canberra. I could even imagine supporting Tony Blair." In September 1994 the two men and their wives were dining in the private room of a London restaurant with Gus Fischer, chief executive of News International. Although there was no talk of how Mr Blair could help Mr Murdoch's business interests, there were separate meetings with Mr Fischer at which "issues of mutual interest" were discussed.

By March 1995 there were reports that Labour plans for cross-media ownership would not force Mr Murdoch to sell any of his empire.

A year into his leadership, Mr Blair was on Hayman Island off Australia, listening to praise from Mr Murdoch at the News Corporation conference for his "courage" in attending.

On the first day of the 1997 general election campaign, there was proof that the countless dinners, lunches and breakfasts involved in this courtship had not been in vain. "The *Sun* Backs Blair," the headline on Mr Murdoch's leading tabloid read. The manoeuvring had paid off.

WHAT THE POLITICIANS SAID

"He [Murdoch] is able to cut prices because of his profits from other interests. We are now faced with blatant predatory pricing." **Robin Cook, now Foreign Secretary, on 26 June 1994, as shadow trade and industry spokesman.**

"I want an inquiry now before the only choice the British public has is to read the *Sun* or the *Times*." **Nigel Griffiths, now competition minister, on 26 June 1994.**

"Predatory pricing, with the intention of forcing rivals out of the market, will reduce choice and undermine competition." **Alistair Darling, now Chief Secretary to the Treasury, in a Commons motion tabled on 5 July 1994.**

"I am surprised that [the Director General of Fair Trading] has not shown greater concern at the potential impact of such an intense price war on the diversity of national newspapers in Britain. The real potential problem is that one more might go under." **Chris Smith, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, speaking as shadow spokesman after the Office of Fair Trading had rejected a complaint about Mr Murdoch's predatory pricing, on 22 October 1994.**

"The inevitable outcome, unless action is taken, is that Murdoch will weaken his British competitors to the point where he will dominate the market." **Mo Mowlam, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, as shadow spokeswoman on national heritage, on 29 June 1994.**

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Killing raises fears of new tit-for-tat violence

By Kim Sengupta

ULSTER'S FRAGILE peace process was under severe threat last night after a prominent loyalist was shot dead in Belfast, provoking fears of a renewed outbreak of murderous sectarian violence.

As the security forces went on alert for a possible Protestant paramilitary backlash, the talks faced a separate crisis after Mo Mowlam, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, and Ken Maginnis, security spokesman for the Ulster Unionist Party, called a truce over a bitter feud which was leading to a political impasse.

Earlier, Ms Mowlam had stated that she would no longer talk to Mr Maginnis because of a series of "personal attacks" by him against her, unless he apologised.

The MP for Fermanagh and South Tyrone refused and stated that he was now "effectively barred from the talks". But with the situation worsening in the province the two – who had been involved in a series of fierce clashes in recent weeks – agreed to put aside their differences at a meeting in a canteen in the House of Commons yesterday afternoon.

Robert Dougan, the man killed yesterday, was said to be associated with the Ulster Defence Association, and had been the subject of two previous murder attempts. The last one was just over a year ago when he survived a shooting. He was in his thirties and lived with his wife and 12-year-old son in the Suffolk area of south Belfast.

Mr Dougan was shot by a lone gunman as he sat at the wheel of his car outside the Balmoral Textiles factory in the south-western Belfast suburb of Dunmurry. A man in a baseball cap and two other men were was seen running away from the scene. Last night, the police were checking a red Mondeo car abandoned at the nearby nationalist Twinbrook Estate as the probable getaway vehicle.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility, but loyalist factions blamed republicans for the killing. Last month the Irish National Liberation Army shot another leading loyalist, Jim Guiney, as he worked behind the counter of his Dunmurry carpet shop.

A friend of Mr Dougan who had been with him minutes before he was shot said: "He was very wary – he knew they were after him." He added that Mr Dougan had been very conscious of the security risk and had taken precautions at his home.

Mr Dougan was the second man to be shot dead in Belfast in 24 hours. On Monday night, a drug dealer, Brendan Campbell, was gunned down outside a restaurant. RUC sources said the IRA, under the pseudonym of Direct Action Against Drugs, had shot and wounded Mr Campbell several weeks ago.

Republican and loyalist traded accusations over the killings and each claimed the other was trying to sabotage the peace process. A senior RUC officer described the situation as "incendiary", and warned of "the dangers of random attacks by splinter groups".

Mr Maginnis maintained that Mr Dougan's murder was "sanctioned by the IRA". He added: "It was obviously an attack to provoke reaction from the Ulster Freedom Fighters in order to make impossible the re-admission of the UDP to the talks process. It is imperative that there should be no retaliation for the murder."

Gary McMichael, leader of the Ulster Democratic Party, also claimed the latest killing had been carried out to provoke a loyalist response. "Quite clearly some republican group has carried this out, the object of killing this man, a Protestant, was because they want to provoke a response," he said.

The killers were also condemned by John Hume, leader of the Social Democratic and Labour Party – who described them as "enemies of the people of Northern Ireland" – and Seamus Close, deputy leader of the Alliance Party.

There was no immediate response from either Sinn Fein or the IRA over the Dougan killing. But earlier Sinn Fein's president, Gerry Adams, had insisted that his party had no involvement in the killing of Mr Campbell. He accused Unionists of trying to exploit the murder for political purposes. "They don't care who was killed. What they see is some tactical advantage to themselves in an attempt to wreck this talks process and oust Sinn Fein from it," Mr Adams said.

Politicians' pose: Austin Mitchell MP for Great Grimsby, taking a photograph of Lord Healey in the Upper Waiting Hall of the House of Commons yesterday at the opening of the Parliamentary Photographic Group annual exhibition Photograph: David Rose

Training councils waste £14.6m

By Barrie Clement
Labour Editor

MORE THAN £14.6m of taxpayers' money has been wasted through incompetence and alleged fraud at vocational training agencies, according to a National Audit Office report published yesterday.

The funds constitute "overpayments" by the Department of Education and Employment to Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) for arranging courses, largely for the unemployed.

The news comes at a time when the Government is investigating allegations of "serious irregularities" at the organisations which provide the training on behalf of TECs. In one case it was claimed that a provider was paid £4.5m by 22 TECs for trainees who were ineligible for training or who were awarded National Vocational Qualifications despite being incompetent. Other trainees could not be traced or were "non-existent". In another inquiry officials were investigating allegedly spurious claims by a training company which had received £3.3m from 11 TECs.

The report by the Comptroller and Auditor General estimates that the value of overpayments to TECs increased by £6m last year to £14.6m.

The report pointed out that the Public Accounts Committee had declared that the £8.6m of "estimated errors" in 1995-96 was unacceptable and that the Government should do all it could to reduce it.

The report acknowledges that inquiries into 65 out of 85 cases of alleged irregularities had been completed and that the department had recovered £1,386,000 from TECs.

In the 20 remaining cases, which the department is pursuing "with vigour", the alleged irregularities could be of the order of £10.3m, the report says.

The document acknowledges that the Government had taken significant steps aimed at improving financial controls at TECs.

A spokesman for the national TEC council pointed out that it was training providers and sometimes the bodies awarding certificates which were being accused of deception, but not TECs themselves.

He said that the cases of alleged fraud only concerned 0.5 per cent of the 500,000 trainees processed each year. There were 9,000 training providers in England and Wales and the investigations concerned a tiny minority of them. "It is a small amount of alleged fraud when you compare it with local authorities or further education," he said.

While TECs had a role in ensuring that providers were performing a "good and honest job", the Employment Service was primarily responsible, he said.

A spokeswoman for the Department of Employment said that the £14.6m in overpayment only constituted 1.2 per cent of the total training budget. She emphasised that the figure referred to 1996-97 and that therefore blame could not be laid at the door of the present administration. "The new government has made it clear that it is taking a robust attitude to the issue."

Jackson prepares for a mayoral role

By byline
title

GLENDA JACKSON, the transport minister, has privately decided to throw her hat into the ring to become the first directly elected Mayor of London. The Oscar-winning former actress will stand in the elections to become the first directly elected Mayor of London, if there is a "yes" vote in the referendum to create the role, close friends confirmed yesterday.

The winner of two Oscars for *Women in Love* and *A Touch of Class* was saying nothing officially about her next possible role, but it is understood she has been persuaded by private polling within the party to stand.

The polling showed that she would be a popular candidate for Labour alongside Ken Livingstone, the Brent East MP and former leader of the Greater London Council. Ms Jackson, now 61, is seen as having a sufficiently high profile to win, while her current duties as Minister for Transport in London could give her the edge over her opponents on the transport problems that would need to be tackled by the new mayor.

Her son, Dan Hodges, said: "At the moment, these reports are pure speculation. However, obviously the Mayor of London is going to have a very important job and anyone offered the opportunity to go for such a role would have to consider it very carefully."

Glenda Jackson: Could be a popular candidate

The MP for Hampstead and Highgate, may be seen as a "stop Ken" candidate, but friends said that she is not regarded as a "Blair babe". "She is seen as being loyal but she is not seen as being one of the 'Blair babes'. She has strong support among the grass roots. But we have to get the 'yes' vote first. It is important that it is a genuine campaign and not a beauty parade for the would-be candidates," said the source.

Ms Jackson will be campaigning for a "yes" vote in the referendum, before officially announcing her decision to stand. It would also mean giving up a ministerial career.

The field is expected to be crowded with several potential Tory candidates limbering up, including best-selling author, Lord Archer and Steve Norris, the former transport minister for London. The Liberal Democrat MP for Southwark and Bermondsey, Simon Hughes, is another possible candidate.

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Legends of rock put Britain on the map

By David Lister
Arts News Editor

THE LATE Kurt Cobain of the rock group Nirvana proposed to Courtney Love in TJ's nightclub in Newport, Wales, after arriving in a bright orange Skoda car.

More than one reason there for her to turn him down, one would have thought. But, of such moments are legends made. And so TJ's duly appears on the British Tourist Authority's new "Rock & Pop Map of Britain", published yesterday to help the increasing number of tourists anxious to see Britain's rock attractions.

Newport is not the only place that might be virgin territory for the international tourist. One of the "tourist attractions" featured on the map is the Francis Service Station in Stratford, east London. Now an old folk's home, this is a dubious part of Britain's rock heritage. Its fame lies in the fact that, refused entry to the garage's toilets in 1965, three of the Rolling Stones chose to urinate against the wall. Magistrates fined them £5 each.

At least something did happen on that warm June night in Stratford, albeit of marginal musical and historic value. The rock tourist who follows the map to other locations might be pushed even to find a 33-year-old wall to justify the fare.

Blackburn, for example, features on the map following its reference in the Beatles' "A Day in the Life" and the 4,000 holes in Blackburn, Lancashire. In January 1967 a local council survey noted 4,000 holes in the town's roads. Alas, most of them have been filled in during the intervening period. But not to worry. For the intrepid traveller it is but a short journey to Widnes railway station where Paul Simon wrote "Homeward Bound" waiting for the milk train to take him back to London following a gig in 1964.

The rock tourist needs to be of a morbid as well musical disposition. A fair few of the map references are casualty spots: the tree on Barnes Common in London into which Marc Bolan's tour crashed and killed him; likewise the Hungry Horse pub on Rowden Hill in Wiltshire outside which rock'n'roller Eddie Cochran was involved in a fatal car crash. The map even contains a slaughterhouse: the one in Digbeth, Birmingham, where Black Sabbath's Ozzy Osbourne once dispatched at least 250 cattle a day.

Some locations on the tourist map do provide footnotes to rock history. In Hull, where Everything But The Girl's Tracey Thorn and Ben Watt met at the university, there was a furniture shop which used the slogan "You can buy everything but the girl". Sadly, furniture shops do no always anticipate BTA rock maps and it is no longer there.

Like all rock history, some of the "facts" are open to dispute. The map directs tourists to Waterloo Station where the Kinks' "Waterloo Sunset" is set. The song, the BTA tells us, is about a couple Terry and Julie, "named after film stars Terence Stamp and Julie Christie". Ray Davies of the Kinks denies this; but no tourist authority worth its salt is going to let the opportunity of a celebrity name-drop pass by.

The most imaginative tourist attraction must be Prestwick Airport in Glasgow which has been unearthed as the place that contradicts the legend that Elvis Presley never set foot on British soil. In March 1960 his aircraft did touch down briefly on his way back to the United States from military service in Germany. Well, kind of. Elvis actually landed at the nearby military base. But that is not open to the public. Still, Prestwick serves a very good cup of tea for the weary rock traveller.

This being Cool Britannia, a government minister launched the publication of the map at Madam Tussaud's Rock Circus at Piccadilly in London yesterday by the arts minister Mark Fisher.

Under the strap "One Nation Under a Groove", the pocket-sized map which unfolds into a poster with a guitar and amp in the shape of Britain, is free and will be available to overseas visitors through BTA's 44 offices world-wide, and via a hotline number, 01271 336083.

On tour: (clockwise from top left) The former garage in east London where the Rolling Stones urinated in 1965; the tree on Barnes Common into which Marc Bolan crashed fatally; Elvis fans at Prestwick in 1960, the only time he set foot in Britain; Walthamstow dogs' track as immortalised by Blur on the cover of their album, *Parklife*; and the zebra crossing in Abbey Road used for the Beatles famous album cover Montage: Kevin Bayliss

Dinner ladies win £4m payout

By Barrie Clement
Labour Editor

EMPLOYERS WILL find it far more difficult to cut the pay of women to trim costs after an industrial tribunal ruling yesterday awarded 400 school dinner ladies up to £15,000 each.

Bedfordshire County Council reduced the women's wages by up to a third nearly four years ago to beat off competition in a compulsory competitive tendering exercise. The Unison public service union and the GMB general union argued that the council had breached the Sex Discrimination Act and equal-pay legislation when it cut the caterers' pay, holiday entitlements and sick pay.

Catering managers could be awarded up to £15,000 because they suffered the most severe cuts, while most cooks and kitchen assistants will receive between £2,000 and £4,000.

Union officials estimated that the out-of-court settlement could cost the council between £3m and £4m.

Rodney Bickerstaffe, general secretary of Unison, said the deal was a "major victory" for women workers. "It sends a clear message to Bedfordshire County Council and other employers that they cannot arbitrarily pick on their women staff when they are carrying out compulsory competitive tendering exercises."

John Edmonds, leader of the GMB, said that the employer had tried to make his members "pay the price of privatisation".

Mary Stacey, of Thompsons solicitors, said the compensation was for loss of pay since 1994, but the settlement also meant that the women's terms and conditions had been reinstated.

Since 1994 Initial Catering Services has won contracts to operate part of the school-meals service in Bedfordshire. Both Initial and the council will now have to increase pay rates, said Ms Stacey.

Joyce Botsford, 58, a kitchen manager at a school in Leighton Buzzard, said she was "jubilant" over the settlement. "I lost about £3,000 a year when the council cut my pay," she added.

A spokesman for Bedfordshire County Council said management were satisfied that a long-standing problem had been resolved. The terms of the deal were agreed between the council and the unions and were accepted by the industrial tribunal, the spokesman said.

MTV changes tracks as big-budget music videos go out of fashion

Video star: MTV helped George Michael to US fame

By Paul McCann
Media Correspondent

Long gone are the days when it thousands of pounds were lavished on music videos shot in exotic locations. Cutting edge directors no longer use them to hone their skills in preparation for the big screen. And now MTV, the channel which made the music video king in the Eighties, has decided the art form is on the way out.

A new programming chief at MTV in America this week shook up the US industry when he ordered 20 programme pilots. His plan is to turn MTV from a music video channel into a lifestyle channel for the world's teenagers.

The pilot series represent the biggest investment the channel has ever made in programming and will see comedy, drama and variety shows replace a line up which, despite some comedy and news, has remained largely wall to wall videos since it launched.

Some of the new programmes will try to breathe life into videos by having an "Artist's Cut" where a band member is featured on the screen sharing insights on the making of the video. A "Videosectomy" show will have panellists analysing the day's most popular videos in an ironic and sarcastic manner.

But despite these efforts it now acknowledged that the music video's days as a money-maker, let alone as a supposed art form are over.

"Their ratings hit a plateau and have been in steady decline for the last three or four years in the US," says Steve King, a director of Zenith Media Worldwide, the media buying agency.

MTV has recently been forced to enlist rock stars and local teenage activists in places such as Denver to stop cable operators taking the channel off of their cable networks because of falling ratings.

On top of competition from other channels MTV has suffered because the music industry no longer invests as much in their artists' flights of fantasy. "Music videos have got into a real cul-de-sac," says Steve Redmond, editor of music industry magazine *Fono*. "The number of records being released is on the increase and the pressure is there to do a video for every one, so the money for them is getting spread more thinly."

The rise of the music video in America was important in allowing British stars such as George Michael and Duran Duran rise to the top there without having to tour endlessly to break the market. Instead as long as they looked good on film they could become a success.

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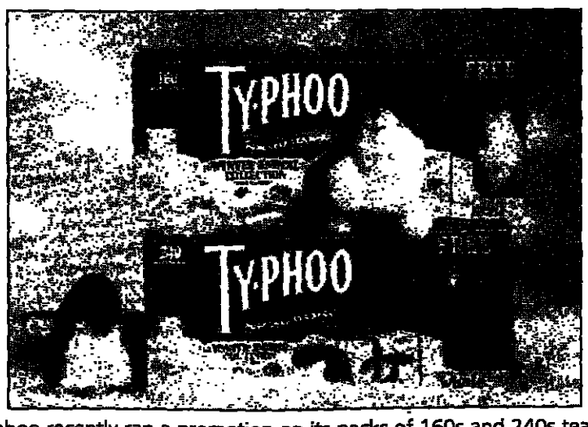

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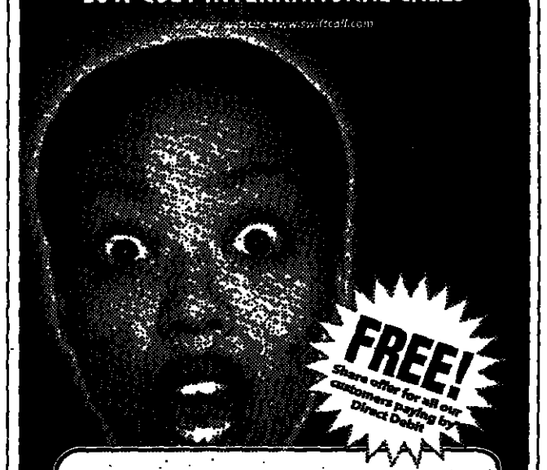

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Prince's shock at 'mistrust'

THE youngest brother of the Sultan of Brunei, the world's richest man, was "shattered" after finding that two close friends and emissaries had abused his trust and were making huge profits out of him, the High Court was told yesterday.

But the "astonishment, shock and horror" expressed by Prince Jefri of Bolkiah was "just nonsense", said Christopher Carr QC, counsel for Bob and Rafi Manoukian.

They are suing the prince for £80m, alleging that he failed to honour deals. They say he reneged on a £55m deal to buy the Adelphi property in the Strand and a £25m verbal deal to renovate the first five storeys of his London home in Park Lane.

He is counter-suing for more than £100m, alleging that the Manoukian brothers, whose family has worked as middlemen for the Brunei royal family for almost two decades, systematically exploited their close friendship and made unreasonable and concealed profits out of him.

Yesterday Mr Carr told the court it was the prince's case that he had trusted "his great friend" Rafi Manoukian not to overcharge him but to act in his best interests.

It would be the prince's evidence that he became suspicious about him and his activities in June 1994. These suspicions were directed to repeat billing – submitting a bill and then sending another one for the same thing at a later date. This was "unfounded", said Mr Carr.

The case continues.

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Woodland art: Snowdrops at Easton Lodge, home of the Edwardian Countess of Warwick, where Brian and Diana Creasey are restoring the gardens Photograph: Brian Harris

Snowdrop carpet restored to bloom

By Stephen Goodwin
Heritage Correspondent

SNOWDROPS are just coming into full bloom at Easton Lodge, near Great Dunmow, Essex. They will cover almost two acres of the restored 17th-century garden and probably last into early March. Snowdrops have been in the garden for countless years and survived many years of neglect.

Easton is one of the many places that can claim that Queen Elizabeth slept under its roof. Henry VIII built a wooden lodge here and his daughter, Elizabeth, is believed to have rested overnight during hunting parties in the Great Forest of Essex. The lodge and the Elizabethan manor that followed it are both long gone.

Easton's heyday was the Edwardian era when the Countess of Warwick - "Darling Daisy" - entertained lavishly at the Victorian house. Her friendship with the Prince of Wales, a frequent guest along with the Marlborough House set, was the stuff of scandal.

The countess, who died in 1938, commissioned Harold Peto to design gardens suitable for her parties. The Italian and Japanese gardens he created are now being restored by Brian and Diana Creasey who in 1971 bought Warwick House, the west wing of the countess's home which survived a fire in 1918.

Forty years of brambles, fallen trees and general ruin is being cleared at Easton, open to visitors under the National Gardens Scheme since 1985. The area where the snowdrops bloom was woodland laid out in the early 17th century. Clearing and replanting is taking years as no work can be done when the bulbs are in growth from November to July.

Gazza's life to help boys with reading

By Matt Rodda

BOYS WHO hate English could be encouraged to improve their reading by being given thrillers and biographies of stars such as Paul Gascoigne and Arnold Schwarzenegger.

Government education advisers are urging schools to take a long, hard look at their teaching to try to tackle the yawning gap between boys' and girls' performance at school.

The move follows last year's GCSE results when 65 per cent of girls achieved a grade C or above in English compared with only 43 per cent of boys.

Yesterday, officials published two reports highlighting the importance of using action-packed books that are designed to appeal to boys who are switched off English because they think it is a girls' subject.

The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority and the Basic Skills Agency believe boys can improve if teachers copy best practice.

The QCA report *Can do Better* and the Basic Skills Agency's report *Improving Boys' Literacy* are available for schools in England and Wales.

But the advisers stressed that they did not want to set out a "template" for teachers to copy but that each school should look at the problem and draw up its own solution.

Jim Pateman, head of strategy at the Basic Skills Agency, said: "We have produced a series of 400-word short stories called chillers which draw in poor readers, the thrillers are often very popular." These include stories with titles like *The Ride to Hell*, about a bus ride where the driver disappears and the coach careers out of control.

The agency had also published vivid but simple biographies of figures such as the actor Arnold Schwarzenegger, the Spice Girls and footballers such as Paul Gascoigne. The biography of Gazza describes his background, his practical jokes and how his behaviour towards his wife Sheryl let him down.

Dr Nick Tate, chief executive of the QCA, said the gap between boys and girls was well known and was greatest at the age of 16.

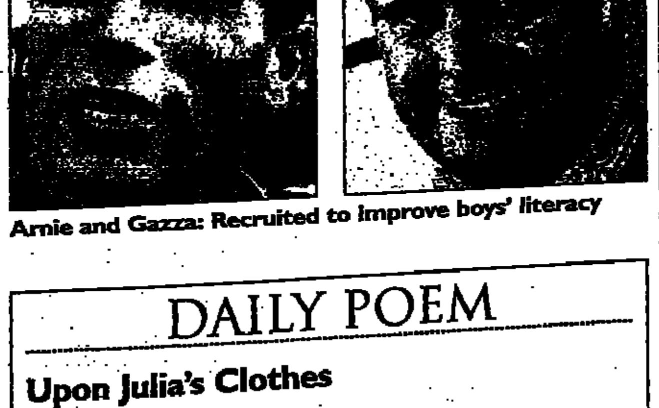
He said: "We had a big push trying to raise girls' achievements 20 years ago in maths, now we need to do the same for boys in English."

He said reading action-packed novels could lead to boys moving on to other literature, including ones they might currently ignore, such as poetry.

Schools needed to get a grip on the problem by analysing the performance of boys and drawing up a strategy for overcoming the peer-group culture that belittled reading.

Research by the QCA had shown that boys who did well at English were often seen as being "cool" because they were good at sport for example.

Other measures also being stressed by the advisers include mentoring schemes and fathers reading with their sons. They want to help interest boys by increasing the amount of drama in English lessons.



Arnie and Gazza: Recruited to improve boys' literacy

DAILY POEM

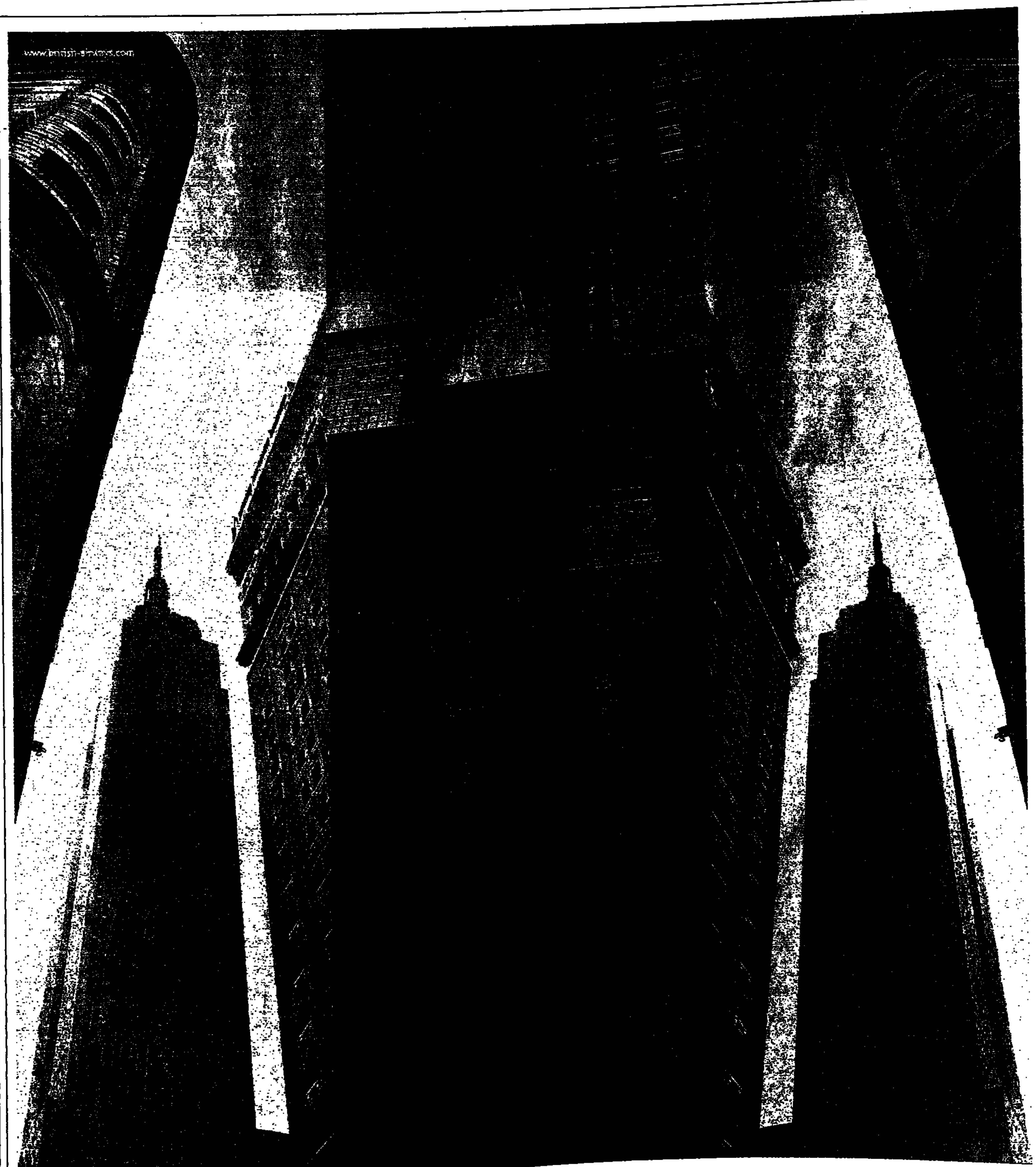
Upon Julia's Clothes

By Robert Herrick

Whenas in silks my Julia goes,
Then, then, methinks, how sweetly flows
That liquefaction of her clothes.

Next, when I cast mine eyes, and see
That brave vibration each way free,
O how that glittering taketh me!

The Daily Poems for this pre-Valentine's Day week come from *The Book of Love*, an 800-page anthology of prose and poetry from many different periods and cultures, edited by Diane Ackerman and Jeanne Mackin (W W Norton, £22.50).



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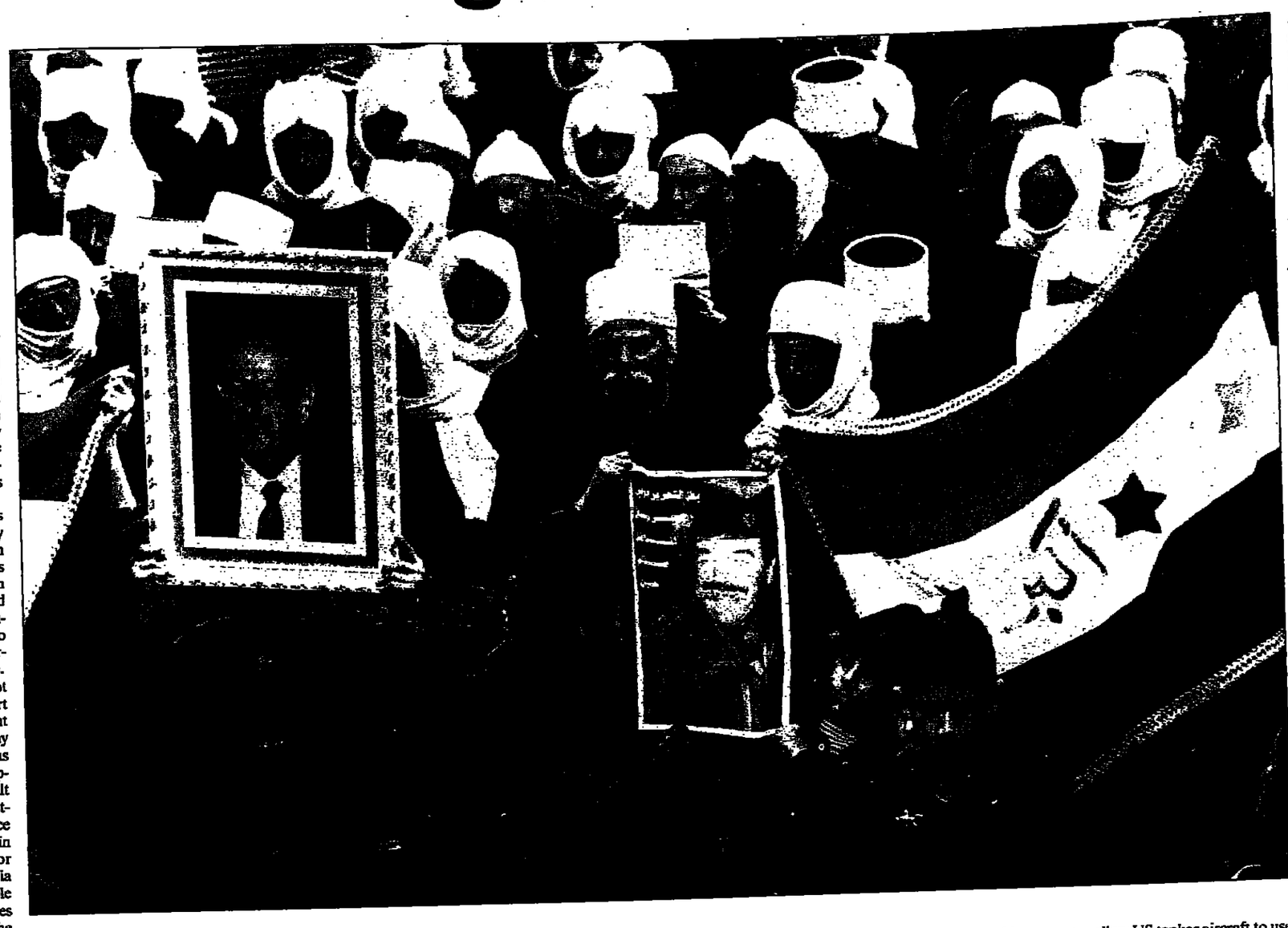
Time running out for diplomacy as

Saddam seeks to enlist Syria to his cause

By Rupert Cornwell



Cross-border support: Syrian Druze Arabs in the Israeli occupied Golan Heights demonstrate their backing for Saddam Hussein by holding his portrait (right) and the Iraqi flag, and a picture of Syrian President Hafez al Assad in defiance of Israeli occupation

Photograph: AFP

AS BRITAIN and the United States racheted up the pressure further, Saddam Hussein moved to enlist Syria into a broadening Arab "anti-military strike" bloc, hostile to any use of force against Iraq in the crisis over United Nations access to suspected weapons plants.

Nothing better illustrates the difference between today and the Gulf War of seven years ago than yesterday's talks in Baghdad between the Syrian President, Hafez al-Assad, and Iraqi Foreign Minister, Saeed al-Sahaf – the first meeting at so high a level between the two former rivals in almost a decade.

In 1991 Syria and Egypt took part in Operation Desert Storm which drove President Saddam out of Kuwait. Today both (as well as Iraq's previous sympathiser Jordan) are opposed to the massive air assault on Iraqi targets which, if Western rhetoric is taken at face value, seems well nigh certain within the coming days or weeks. This time Saudi Arabia is not making its bases available and even the smaller Gulf states which may secretly relish the prospect of another bloody lesson for President Saddam, are careful not to say so publicly.

But the Anglo-American alliance was talking tougher than ever yesterday. As Foreign Secretary Robin Cook warned the Commons that President Saddam's latest offers fell "well short" of what was required to end the crisis, America's UN ambassador ruled out "any deals or compromises" on the inspection issue.

With those words, Bill Richardson dismissed the implicit suggestion from the UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, that some diplomatic fudging might be required. Baghdad had painted itself into a corner, Mr Annan told the BBC, "but we should not insist on humiliating them". For the time being however, humiliation seems exactly what Washington has in mind. If President Saddam "does not comply with the will of the international community, we must be prepared to act", President Bill Clinton reiterated last night.

To bolster the threat, the Administration claims it is successfully forging a war coalition of its own. At a stop in Qatar yesterday during his current tour of the region, the US Defense Secretary William Cohen declared that a "coalition is building" – a statement based on the agreement by the United Arab Emirates and Oman to allow US tanker aircraft to use their bases in support of an attack on Iraq.

But the guts of that "coalition" remain almost exclusively Anglo-Saxon and "White Old Commonwealth". Australia and Canada having now given their blessing for military action. Within the European Union, only Germany and Holland are in favour of air strikes to punish President Saddam. Russia, China and France, the three other members of the Security Council, are all opposed.

The comparative lack of international support for Washington and London is the main reason why, against the odds, a diplomatic solution may yet be found. Mr Cohen adamantly denied the US was in the grip of "war fever", while the French Foreign Minister, Hubert Vedrine, said that though the chances of a peaceful settlement were fading, France was "not discouraged" by developments.

For their part, the UN, Russia and the Arab countries vow to pursue every possible diplomatic avenue. Mr Annan says he is ready to go to Baghdad to broker a deal, if the outline of one emerges in the next few days.

"If we maintain fundamentalist positions all round, we will not find a solution," he told the BBC.

Even before the shooting war begins however, it is having military repercussions. Turkish troops were reportedly fighting Kurdish guerrillas in a part of Northern Iraq not controlled by Saddam Hussein – apparently to forestall any mass influx of Kurdish refugees if the US attacks in the south.

Cook seeks to head off MPs' revolt

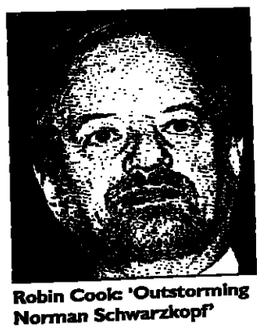
By Colin Brown
Chief Political Correspondent

The Government is planning a full-scale debate next week to show a united front at the House of Commons and crush opposition to the threat of a renewed bombing campaign against Saddam Hussein's military might in Iraq.

Robin Cook gave a clear signal in the Commons that air strikes would be targeted at Saddam's Republican Guard in an attempt to destroy his military support and bring about the overthrow of the Iraqi leader.

The strongest call for action during a statement in the Commons came from John Major, the Prime Minister at the time of the Gulf War, who attacked Saddam as a "psychopath" and urged the allies to target the Republican Guard who had sustained the Iraqi leader in power.

"Saddam has kept himself in power through fear and force," the Foreign Secretary said. "He should be under no illusion that if military action is taken, that power which keeps him in power will be hit hard."



Robin Cook: 'Outstorming Norman Schwarzkopf'

Mr Cook wants the Commons debate to show a united, cross-party alliance in support of the threatened action against Iraq, and *The Independent* has learned that Mr Cook has asked the Leader of the House, Ann Taylor, to arrange an emergency debate next Tuesday in the Commons.

The Foreign Secretary is keen to use a vote in favour of action to increase the pressure on Saddam to back down, and to snuff out opposition, in spite of signs of a coalition at Westminster between left-wing Labour MPs and hard right Tories, who want to destroy Saddam, but share the scepticism of General Sir Peter de la Billière, who commanded the British forces in the Gulf War, about the military objectives of renewed air strikes.

"There is an unholy alliance between the left and the Tory right wing," said one prominent left-winger.

Ministerial sources said Mr Cook is keen to show that the vast majority of MPs on both sides of the House supported the action.

A member of the Campaign Group of left-wing Labour MPs estimated that only about 20 Labour MPs will vote against the Government, and they are not expecting any Tory MPs to rebel.

Mr Cook last week privately met leading left-wing dissidents, including Tony Benn, Dennis Skinner, and George Galloway, who accused Mr Cook of "outstorming Norman Schwarzkopf", the commander of the allied forces in the Gulf War, known as "Stormin' Norman".

The Tory leader, William Hague, has pledged his support to Tony Blair for action, if it is necessary, but Michael Howard, the shadow Foreign Secretary, warned that there was a danger of conflicting signals from the Government about the objectives of military action "ending in uncertainty".

Few MPs believed the opinion poll showing the public in favour of action. One Tory MP said: "I was on a phone-in show at the weekend and nearly everyone was against it."

There are also signs of a split between Britain and America over the strategy of returning to the United Nations for a fresh resolution to carry out the air raids. Mr Cook said the action was covered by existing UN resolutions, but he appeared to leave open the option of seeking a fresh mandate, backed by Japan, which the US is against.

Operation Bolton alarms citizens of peaceful Lancashire town

Colin Brown and **Esther Leach** gauge responses to the Gulf War codename

Bolton: Its citizens would prfer not to go down in history as the codename for an attack

Photograph: Guzelian

THE CITIZENS are proud of the Wanderers and Nat Lofthouse, but the Lancashire mill town of Bolton would prefer not to go down in history as the British codename for a renewed blitz on Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

"Why not call it Operation Second Chance, because that's what it is, a second chance to deal with Saddam Hussein," said housewife Phyllis Hamer. "I don't think the name of Bolton or any other town or city should be used in this way, it's just not appropriate. Bolton is not an aggressive town and I don't like the idea of it being known for a military operation, however necessary it may be."

Mrs Hamer was echoing the feelings of Bolton South East MP Brian Iddon who is raising the use of the name Operation Bolton with the Ministry of Defence. The MoD says it chose the name at random using a computer.

"We have got pacifists who object to the name of a British town being linked to the name of a potential war. And we have a 20 per cent Muslim population in Bolton. I feel that to avoid any possible controversy, they should not have chosen a place-name," Mr Iddon told *The Independent*.

Desert Storm – the codename for the Gulf War to expel Iraq from Kuwait – would have been all right. "We have links to HMS *Beaver*. It could have been called Beaver, Eagle or anything other than Bolton," said Mr Iddon. And he does not agree with his local paper, the *Bolton Evening News*, that the town should be proud of seeing its name used for the operation.

Others shared Mr Iddon's concern. Frank Whittle, who works for an emergency breakdown service, said the Government should be sensitive to the different ethnic cultures in Bolton. He added: "Many Muslims live in Bolton and they may be upset that the name of their town is used for a military operation like this. Feelings do run high and it may cause some friction.

"It is very important to some people and I don't think the Government appreciates what something as simple as this can mean. We should think of something else, nothing to do with any town or city but perhaps something military."

Some Muslims were offended. College student Asif Patel, 17, said: "Of course it's insensitive. There are many Muslims who live here in Bolton and the Government should realise that."

But Ahmed Patel, 46, a businessman, said although it was insensitive it was not important. He said: "I have talked to many people and we are agreed. We are British first and will support Britain in any conflict. But we don't want any war especially against a Muslim country and hope the dispute will be settled without one."

"You may as well call it Operation Rice Pudding for the difference it makes. It's just not important," said Craig Anthony, a shop assistant. "It's not going to make any difference to Bolton's reputation, except give the town a higher profile maybe, especially if the military action is successful but otherwise it's just a name."

Norman and Evelyn Ward, strolling past the town's war memorial, said they were concerned about the link between military action and Bolton because the town's heritage and reputation was important.

"It's a town known for its mills, an industrial town, not one that goes to war or has an aggressive nature," said Mr Ward, 66. "I don't think any town or city should be used as a name for something like this."

Mrs Ward, 63, added: "I hope Bolton doesn't end up as a target. It's a bit like tempting fate, isn't it?"

Bishops express concern at escalation of war fever

By Kim Sengupta

Eight Church of England bishops have publicly expressed their fears that Britain and the United States may be hurtling towards an armed conflict with Iraq which could lead to large scale civilian casualties and could not be morally justified .

The views expressed in a letter to *The Independent* newspaper by the senior clerics is the first sign of the opposition and concern among those in the hierarchy of the church to what is seen as increasing war fever in London and Washington, and the belligerent attitude of the governments of the two countries.

A peace rally to be held at Westminster in central London tomorrow night is expected to draw a large crowd. It will be addressed by Members of Parliament, show business personalities and members of a number of religious denominations. Labour MPs George Galloway and Tam Dalyell say that they have received hundreds of letters of support.

An opinion poll published yesterday showed that among all age groups support for British involvement in military action was 56 per cent, with 32 per cent against. Among those aged between 18 and 24, support was even higher, with 65 per cent in favour of military involvement and 22 per cent against.

However, those arguing against air strikes feel that the war lobby has so far won the debate almost by default, and the time has now come to present the case for peace.

The letter to this newspaper is signed by Rowan Williams, Bishop of Monmouth; Peter Price, Bishop of Kingston; Barry Morgan, Bishop of Bangor; Wilfred Wood, Bishop of Croydon; John Austin, Bishop of Aston; Christopher Mayfield, Bishop of Manchester; Graham James, Bishop of St Germain; William Ind, Bishop of Truro; Jack Nicholls, Bishop of Sheffield and Peter Selby, Bishop of Worcester.

It says: "As Anglican bishops we are concerned about the present direction of British and American policy on Iraq. We share the concern of the British and American governments that every effort be made to stop – or at least limit – the damage being done by Saddam Hussein's regime to his regime and the stability of the entire region. However, any action that will involve large-scale civilian casualties in Iraq leaves the Western nations in a weak moral position. What is more, military intervention by Western nations is likely to reinforce the already deep military mistrust of the West".

The bishops state that they are not objecting "from a pacifist position" but from a common concern to urge government to search more actively for alternatives to violence, and to seek to work with international consensus rather than allowing any kind of "superpower" mentality to make the running.

According to the Church of England, the senior churchmen had thought long and hard about becoming involved in the growing controversy because they did not want to be seen to be interfering in the political arena. However, it was felt in the end that their views should be put to the public. The letter states: " We raise these points on the basis of Christian conviction that innocent citizens have the right not to become the target of threats of violence".

The bishops ask the Government to consider that military action not endorsed by the United Nations Security Council might weaken the credibility of the UN in the Arab world: not all options have been exhausted so as to justify the launching of war and since the exact locations of chemical and biological production centres are not known, there is no certainty of knowing that they have been eliminated.

The rally tomorrow night is due to be be attended or receive the support of, among others, the writer Harold Pinter, historian Antonia Fraser, actress Vanessa Redgrave, producer Thelma Holt, writer and director Alan Rickman, and former members of the diplomatic service.

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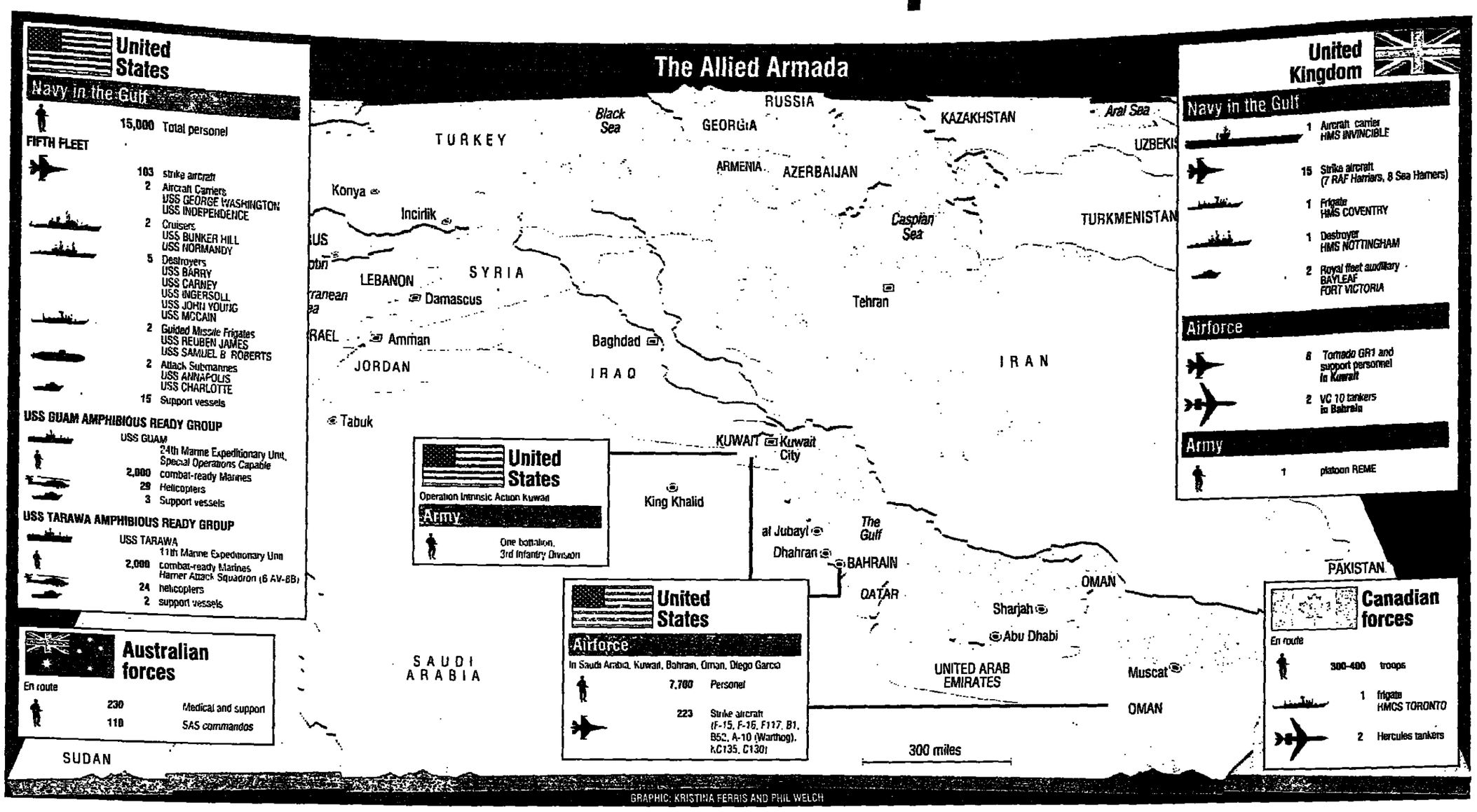
a huge force takes shape in the Gulf



GRAPHIC: KRISTINA FERRIS AND PHIL WELCH

Warships and warplanes: the deadly assembly poised to attack

Nicholas von Herberstein reports on the hi-tech armada circling in the Gulf

COALITION forces are poised to strike at Saddam Hussein. Once again a powerful armada of military hardware is being assembled in the Gulf to re-enforce the diplomatic negotiations between Iraq and the United Nations.

It is a huge and deadly assembly. The United States Navy air wings alone are capable of delivering just under ten million pounds of bombs and missiles. The fleet itself has 600 vertical-launch system cells available, all of which can fire Tomahawk Cruise missiles. Yet the forces that are assembled are only a fraction of the the total that were involved during the 1990-1991 Gulf War.

In 1991, the coalition had 1,200 strike aircraft, 90 warships, six aircraft carriers, approximately 500,000 land forces and 2,500 tanks. This time, it is a much smaller force – about a third of the aircraft and ships, and a far smaller land component. On the one hand there are virtually no ground forces assembled, because this time the intention is to deliver an air attack, not a land invasion; on the other, Saudi Arabia has, to date, not given its support to the US, and no operations will be conducted from Saudi soil.

British forces are of enormous political significance, yet militarily they are but a small component of the much larger group. Britain has at present the aircraft carrier HMS *Invincible*, with eight Sea Harriers and seven RAF Harriers, who are supported by the frigate HMS *Coventry*, the destroyer HMS *Nottingham*, and the supply ships RFA *Bayleaf* and *Fort Victoria*. Further British personnel are in Kuwait, with eight Tornado GR1 and their support crews. Two VC-10 tankers and a company of Royal Engineers complete the British force.

America has the largest military contingent by far in the Gulf, with 15,000 navy and 7,100 airforce personnel. The combined forces present a very powerful and capable force with two carrier groups, part of the US 5th Fleet.

The aircraft carrier USS *George Washington* and the USS *Independence* boast 103 strike aircraft comprised of F-14s, F18s and EA-6B aircraft. According to a US Navy statement, a carrier airwing typically includes 4,600,000 pounds of air-launched missiles, laser-guided bombs, general purpose bombs and other ammunition.

Added to the carrier groups, there are two cruisers and four destroyers that are Tomahawk-capable. Two guided missile frigates and attack submarines complete the immediate offensive package available to the US Navy.

En route to the Gulf are an additional 4,000 Special Operations Marines from the 11th and 24th Marine Expeditionary Units who are reinforced by a complement of AV-8B harriers, Super Cobra Attack helicopters and other support helicopters. The US Navy also has an élite US Navy Seal team and other military diving units in the Gulf.

The US Airforce has approximately 250 aircraft in units stationed around the region which are comprised of F117 Stealth planes, B-52 and B1 bombers, as well as an undisclosed complement of F-15 and F16 strike planes

Washington has had problems bringing political support to bear. But the US and Britain do not stand alone, and other allies have offered their support. The Australian prime minister, John Howard, announced yesterday that he would send 250 personnel, including 110 Special Air Service commandos, for Search and Rescue operations to support the US: "If it does become necessary for a United States-led coalition to use force, then Australia has decided it will make a contribution to that effort," he said. And Jean Chretien, the Canadian prime minister, said that Canada was sending a frigate, two Hercules transport aircraft and 300 to 400 troops to the Gulf.

Several Gulf states, with Saudi Arabia being the notable exception, have given political support to the coalition forces as well as providing logistical support by making air-bases and infrastructure available.

The Americans have pre-positioned stores of supplies and munitions in the Gulf state of Oman. Muscat has told William Cohen, the US Secretary of Defense, that the US would be welcome to station 23 support aircraft on its territories. Five of those planes are KC-10 refuelling tankers. Six B-52 bombers will be based on the British island of Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean, and the refuelling facility will help them carry out long-range operations.

The lack of ground forces underlines that this will be an operation with limited objectives: we are not about to see a rerun of 1991. But to reassure its allies, the US has some ground troops in the region. Kuwait has an additional US military unit: a battalion task force of the 3rd Brigade, a 3rd Infantry division is currently on Operation Intrinsic Action with air defence, as well as its usual infantry, mechanised infantry and reconnaissance capabilities. The 3rd Infantry Division earned its fame in the Gulf War when it spear-headed the US 7th Corps attack against the Iraqi Republican Guard.

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Clinton must wait as Monica decides

By John Carlin in Washington

IT HAS to be a burden to be 24 years old and realise that the fate of the leader of the most powerful nation on earth could depend on your word, on a choice at once simple and harrowing between responding to a straight question with a yes or a no.

Monica Lewinsky's burden is made heavier by the knowledge that if she refuses to make the choice, if she declines to answer at all, her own fate is in the balance. While President Bill Clinton would remain at the White House, she could be in jail.

Ms Lewinsky, the former White House trainee caught in the eye of the biggest political storm since Watergate, has been summoned to appear before the grand jury in Washington tomorrow to answer questions about her relationship with the president.

While she has indicated that she would refuse to answer questions before the grand jury, invoking her Fifth Amendment right to protect herself against self-incrimination, she would still not be off the hook. For if she takes the Fifth, Kenneth Starr, the independent counsel investigating the president's alleged misdemeanours, would have the legal authority to compel her to testify under limited immunity. In such an event the statements she made to the grand jury could not be used against her in a court of law, but she would remain open to criminal charges based on any other evidence Mr Starr might obtain.

Such evidence might include testimony from Ashley Raines, a close friend of hers from the White House who, according to *Newsweek*, confirmed earlier reports before the grand jury last week that the president had left messages on Ms Lewinsky's answering machine.

Should Ms Lewinsky turn down limited immunity, should she still persist in her refusal to co-operate with Mr Starr, he would then be in a position to charge her with contempt of court. The consequence of that, in all probability, would be jail.

"She is not going to jail," her lawyer, William Ginsburg, declared on Monday. "Nobody's going to abuse her. I'm not going to let that happen."

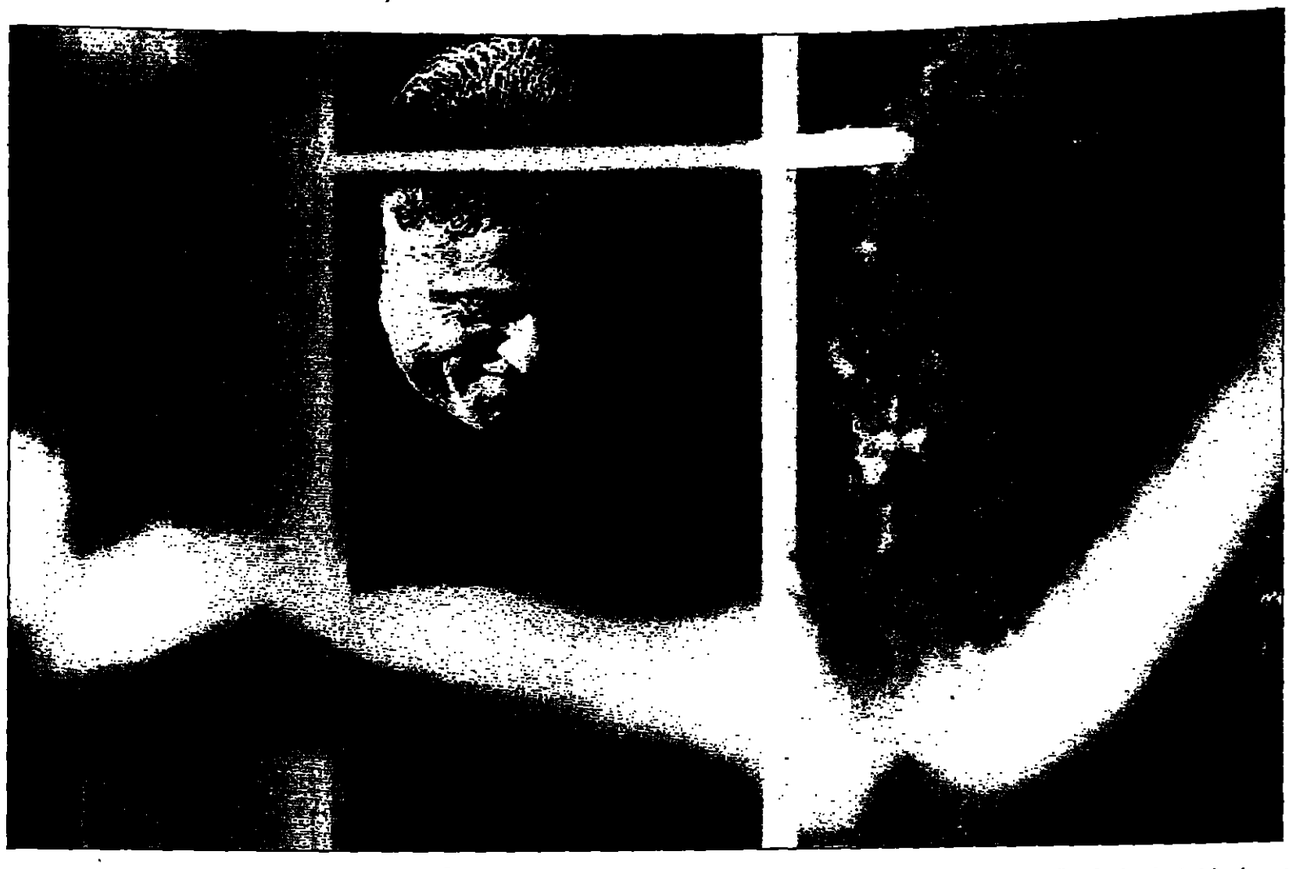
To that end Mr Ginsburg was expected to file an urgent motion in court yesterday aimed at squashing the subpoena requiring his client to appear before the grand jury, a fact-finding body invested in this matter with the authority to establish the legal plausibility of Mr Starr's case against the president.

Ms Lewinsky could have got away scot-free had she agreed to co-operate fully with Mr Starr in exchange for an offer of total immunity from perjury charges arising from what, according to all indications, was the false affidavit she gave lawyers prosecuting Paula Jones' sexual harassment suit against the president. In the affidavit she denied having sex with the president. Logically, that must have been a lie for otherwise it would be a mystery why Mr Ginsburg should have spent the last three weeks engaged in exhaustive negotiations with Mr Starr over an immunity deal, why Mr Ginsburg should even be contemplating the notion that Ms Lewinsky could end up in jail.

According to the plethora of leaks, Ms Lewinsky was prepared to acknowledge under oath that she did indeed have a sexual relationship with the president, in direct contradiction of his vehement public denials and his legal denial when he himself testified under oath before Paula Jones' lawyers.

Such an admission alone from Ms Lewinsky would expose Mr Clinton to a possible perjury charge. But Mr Starr was greedy. He made it clear to Mr Ginsburg that he would only grant his client full immunity if she testified that the president, in collaboration with his close friend and Washington power-lawyer Vernon Jordan, had gone out of their way to persuade her to lie to Ms Jones' lawyers. Armed with that testimony from Ms Lewinsky, Mr Starr would be in a position to bring cases of subornation of perjury or obstruction of justice against the president and his friend. Whereupon the possibility of impeachment hearings on Capitol Hill would become very real.

In the event that Ms Lewinsky agrees to testify under limited immunity that she did have sexual relations with the president, the White House would have little option but to wage a campaign against her credibility.



Personal politics: President Clinton working in the Oval Office yesterday
Photograph: AFP

China averts rights row with US and expels dissident

By Teresa Poole in Peking

China has deflected a potential human-rights flare-up with Washington by expelling a US-based dissident who sneaked back into the country under a false name. The events yesterday meant Peking had opted to dispose of the problem as quickly as possible rather than make an example of the man. Wang Bingzhang, a pro-democracy campaigner, was arrested in Anhui province on Friday after entering China last month. On Monday he was put on an plane in Shanghai for Los Angeles. "China is like a boil. On the outside the skin is smooth but on the inside it is full of pus," he told Reuters from the US. Three mainland dissidents who were arrested after meeting Mr Wang have also been released.

China's leaders probably decided they had more to lose by taking a hard line against Mr Wang, who has lived in the US for 15 years but does not have citizenship. His case has overshadowed the arrival this week of three US religious leaders on an unprecedented fact-finding mission offered by President Jiang Zemin during his Washington summit in October. Peking is trying to improve its image before next month's UN Human Rights Commission meeting in Geneva, when European countries and the US decide whether to renew the annual attempt to condemn China. In January, Peking invited the UN's top rights official, Mary Robinson, to visit, but no date has been fixed. In Los Angeles, Mr Wang, who had not set foot in China since 1978, said: "How the Communist Party handled my case can serve as a reference for other pro-democracy activists who want to return to China. Their swift decision could be a sign that the Communist Party is adopting new ways and becoming more open." But he was scathing in his assessment of political stability on the mainland. "People lack morals. Cheating and lies are everywhere. The Communist Party, government, military, police, prosecutors and judges are all corrupt and things are only getting worse. Something big will happen in China in the next few years. If we don't come back now to make preparations for the founding of a new state, the democratic movement will lose another opportunity." Mr Wang confirmed he entered China with the idea of founding an opposition group; he wanted to attract government cadres, entrepreneurs and workers.

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Le Pen losing grip on control of the far right

The long struggle for succession in the NF has begun. **John Lichfield** in Paris reports

IS THE Jean-Marie Le Pen era of the French far right drawing gently to a close? The President of the National Front – le chef or la bête (beast) as he likes to be called – has been seriously weakened inside his own party in recent days. Firstly, he appears to have given up a long struggle to prevent the emergence of his *de facto* number two, Bruno Mégret, as his all-but-anointed heir-apparent.

Secondly, one of the other senior figures in the party – its only sitting MP – has delivered a stinging snub to Mr Le Pen before a cheering FN audience. Jean-Marie Le Chevallier, deputy for Toulon, was disqualified by the French Constitutional Council last week for financial irregularities in his campaign last May. He then announced, to an FN youth conference, that his wife, Cendrine, also a rising power in the party, would run to succeed him.

Worse, he let it be known that he had first offered the chance to re-win the seat in a by-election this spring to Mr Le Pen himself. He revealed that the President of the NF, notoriously reluctant to put himself directly into the electoral firing-line, had turned the offer down. The two developments, taken together, have been interpreted both inside the NF and outside as the beginning of the long anticipated struggle for succession: Mr Le Pen is 70 in June.

Mr Mégret presents himself as the potentially respectable face of the far right, who could forge alliances – maybe even governments – with the traditional centre-right parties. But he is hated by many in the party and accused by some as being more ideologically extreme, in private, than Mr Le Pen. Mr Le Chevallier, a former member of the centre-right UDF, may fancy his chances of emerging as a compromise candidate to lead the French ultra right into the new millennium. No overt move against Mr Le Pen is likely before the next Presidential election in 2002.

But political commentators in France have noted a sharp change in Mr Le Pen's public utterances on Mr Mégret in recent weeks. Where previously he had denigrated, even insulted, his number two in public, Mr Le Pen told a radio interviewer recently that he could envisage him as his successor. He described him as a "very remarkable man".

The legal and electoral events in Toulon are a case of history repeating itself. Mr Mégret's wife, Catherine, won a pivotal election for the mayorship of Vitrolles, near Marseilles, last year after a previous election, which her husband lost, was declared void.

The difference was that Mr Le Pen picked Mrs Mégret to run in Vitrolles personally. Mr Le Chevallier picked his wife without waiting for Mr Le Pen's approval.

Officially the decision has to be ratified by the party, but the Le Chevalliers have such a powerful personal power base in Toulon that it appears Mr Le Pen has been presented with a *fait accompli*.

Minister at centre of French language row is brought to book

DOES THE French education minister know her French grammar? Apparently not.

French primary school pupils spend hours learning the complexities of grammar and spelling and, in particular, how e's and s's should be added to adjectives and participles which agree with female or plural nouns and pronouns.

Ségolène Royal, minister in charge of primary school education, made two glaring blunders in seven lines – missing out an "e" and then an "s" – in an official letter reproduced triumphantly in *Le Figaro* yesterday.

The errors were all the more embarrassing because the minister is in the midst of a political-linguistic argument with the august guardian of the purity of the French language, the Académie Française. She is one of several women in the Jospin government who insists on calling herself *la ministre*. *Ministre* is a masculine word and should properly always be *le ministre*, whatever the gender of the minister concerned.

Ségolène Royal: Press seized on her grammatical gaffes

Several members of the Académie Française wrote to President Jacques Chirac last month asking him to stamp out the iniquitous usage of *la ministre*. Ms Royal responded that the academicians were, to paraphrase her French, a bung of sexist, linguistic stick-in-the-muds.

Imagine, then, the wicked delight with which Maurice Druon, a member of the academy, novelist and former Gaullist minister for culture, received a copy of a letter written by Ms Royal last month to a historian in Nancy. "Two huge errors in seven lines ... what a sad example of the decline of our schools", Mr Druon wrote triumphantly in a commentary alongside a facsimile of the offending missive in *Le Figaro*.

He said he accepted that the letter had probably been typed by a secretary but should not the education minister check her letters for spelling mistakes? Horror upon horrors, Ms Royal's letter to the historian was an admission that she had mixed up two events in French religious history which are almost 1,000 years apart. — *John Lichfield*

Share-out: Gypsies in the Bulgarian village of Kamener, 200 miles east of Sofia, waving bread that the United States Agency for International Development has given them. Supplies to the area are intended to last five months Photograph: Petar Petrov/Reuters

Four shot dead at German borders

Four people were killed yesterday in unrelated incidents on Germany's borders with Poland and Switzerland. In the town of Konstanz on the Swiss border, an Italian gunman shot his way through the crossing, killing one German and one Swiss agent before shooting himself. German authorities said the gunman, who was seriously injured, was apparently a weapons smuggler.

At Goerlitz on the Poland-German crossing, a man from Kazakstan grabbed an official's gun and began shooting wildly as German customs agents were searching a bus en route from Alma Ata. Two German agents were killed. Police managed to arrest him. — *AP, Konstanz*

Freetown fighting

Panic broke out in the Sierra Leone capital Freetown yesterday as fighting between the local army and West African peace-keepers drew closer to the city centre.

Residents said ground fighting had reached the western districts of the city.

The commander of the Ecomog peace-keeping force confirmed an offensive by his troops to evict the military junta which toppled the elected government last May. — *Reuters, Freetown*

Hostage freed

The release of a kidnapped businessman reignited debate over an Italian law blocking the payment of multi-million dollar ransoms. Sardinian kidnappers freed Giuseppe Soffiantini on Monday night after 237 days during which they cut off part of both his ears and demanded 10 billion lire (£3.4m). Despite a law which discourages kidnappings by freezing the assets of a victim's family, Mr Soffiantini's captors pocketed five billion lire. — *Reuters, Rome*

Yeltsin preaches anti-war line to sympathetic Italy

By Phil Reeves in Moscow

HE WAS doddery on his feet and sometimes befuddled, which is par for the course when Boris Yeltsin ventures abroad these days. Yet the Russian president firmly held his political ground in Rome yesterday with a warning that bombing Iraq could produce a "big conflagration".

During a day marred by minor slips and fleeting moments of confusion, Mr Yeltsin made clear he is unrepentant about his operatic predictions last week that the crisis could precipitate a third world war. A consummate headline-grabber, his overall aim is to use the Iraq crisis to restore some of Russia's diplomatic clout globally, and outshine other opponents of military action, notably France and China.

But his aides were yesterday pursuing a more short term goal – piloting the 67-year-old president through his first foreign outing since his last bout of illness over Christmas. They painfully recall his last disastrous trip to Sweden in December, when he made impromptu offers of nuclear disarmament, chastised officials in front of the Swedish king and appeared, at one point, to believe he was in Norway.

No sooner had he set foot in Italy on Monday than he managed another gaffe by declaring that Russia had persuaded the United Nations Secretary General, Kofi Annan, to go to Baghdad. Yesterday he sought to extract himself from the muddle, claiming that Mr Annan had second thoughts after coming under political pressure.

Overall, however, Mr Yeltsin has got his main message across in Italy. He foresaw a "poshar", or fire, he warned, at a joint press conference with the Italian Prime Minister, Romano Prodi, "That is what is worrying both of us."

Yesterday evening Mr Yeltsin headed for a photo-opportunity which promised to make his point even more resoundingly – an audience (his second) with Pope John Paul II, who concurs with his views on Iraq. Mr Yeltsin will have been acutely aware of the impact of sharing a camera shot with the 77-year-old pontiff, and showing the world that they have more in common than fame, poor health, and experience of life under Soviet Communism.

However, the meeting is unlikely to have been entirely amicable. Relations between the Russian Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches – which have been locked in a feud that dates back to the Great Schism of 1054 – have worsened since the end of the Soviet Union.

In particular, the Vatican is fuming over Russia's legislation on freedom of conscience, which Mr Yeltsin signed into law last year, ignoring a personal written plea by the Pope. The law recognises Russia's traditional religions – Orthodoxy, Judaism, Buddhism and Islam – but imposes potentially restrictive conditions on newcomers.

Its critics say that in Russia it is not the letter of the law that matters but the message it conveys to officialdom. So, while Catholics have so far not felt any direct impact, it is no coincidence that their priests are now experiencing bureaucratic difficulties getting Russian visas.

Despite this, the opening of a dialogue with Orthodoxy is one of the few remaining ambitions of John Paul's papacy. It is, however, one he is unlikely to fulfil. His hopes were dealt a painful blow in 1996 when the Russian Patriarch, Alexei II, cancelled a planned meeting after pressure from hardcore conservative clerics. The latter resent the Polish pontiff for his catalytic role in the evolution of Solidarity and the eventual collapse of the Soviet Union.

Shevardnadze blames attack on oil politics

By Phil Reeves

THE RUTHLESS and hugely lucrative politics of Caspian oil may lie beneath the latest attempt on his life, the shaken but unharmed Georgian president, Eduard Shevardnadze, claimed yesterday.

Speaking a day after gunmen blasted his armoured limousine with machine-guns and grenades, he indicated that he suspects "international terrorists" backed by reactionary former Soviet elements who resent his 5 million-strong republic's independence. "They cannot forgive Afghanistan, the Berlin Wall, European liberation, oil pipelines and the Eurasian transport corridor."

Survivor: Eduard Shevardnadze (left) after the attempt on his life in 1995, and yesterday when he escaped unhurt

Georgia is almost certain to be chosen as the route for a from neighbouring Azerbaijan to Turkey, and to its own port of *Poti* on the Black Sea. Jostling for the route – which promises hefty returns from tariffs – has been under way for months, particularly from the Russians who want it to run over their territory. "Very powerful forces are interested in a different solution of the question linked to the transportation of oil through Georgia," said the 70-year-old president.

The attack, which left three people dead, served as a reminder of the volatility of the country, which erupted into civil war during the break-up of the Soviet Union but has been relatively peaceful since the last attempt on Mr Shevardnadze's life in August 1995.

Despite cries of indignation from Boris Yeltsin and his foreign minister, Yevgeny Primakov, Monday's attack will sour relations with Moscow. These are already strained by ill feeling over Russia's role in the breakaway region of Abkhazia and the presence of Russian military bases on Georgian soil.

Tbilisi also blames elements in Moscow for sheltering Igor Giorgadze, Mr Shevardnadze's former security chief, whom Georgia accuses of masterminding the previous attempt on the president's life. Georgia's parliament has demanded investigation into the attack be held within Russia's bases.

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Pictures that show how Edward loved

Edward's younger brothers Bertie and George

PRINCE EDWARD'S PRIVATE SOUVENIR 1912-14

Mary Bertie and Edward, royal teenagers larking about like childeren The albums reveal members of George V's family in more informal mood than has ever been seen before

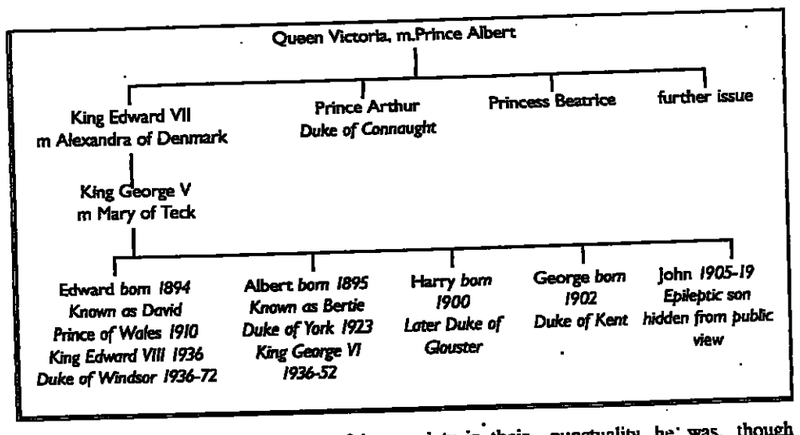
Stalking at Balmoral: Edward and Bertie with one of three stags taken on a day when their younger brother George (below, with Edward and Harry) was 'blooded'

Harry, later Duke of Gloucester, the first of the Royal Family to go to school

George V, Lady Hertford, Queen Mary and Edward's brother George, the future Duke of Kent

Love affair which ended in a sad exile

Paul Vallely looks at a remarkable family record



IT WAS the greatest love story of the century. In 1936 the most eligible bachelor in the world, King Edward VIII, after less than a year as British monarch, abdicated before he could be crowned. He had fallen in love with an unknown American divorcée who was not generally considered beautiful . Yet the king gave up his throne and an empire to marry her.

But the story went sour. After the Abdication, Edward moved to France, where he married his beloved, Wallis Simpson, and although the new king, George VI, made Edward the Duke of Windsor he refused to extend to the new duchess the rank of "Her Royal Highness" – even as four decades later that title was to be removed from Diana, Princess of Wales on her divorce from the present Heir Apparent. For more than 30 years the Windsors lived a sad exile.

Small wonder that on the Duke's death in 1972 the Duchess gave away her husband's photograph album containing the most intimate pictures yet seen of the family which had spurned her, including as it did so many photographs of the new monarch, George VI – the father of our present Queen – who appears frequently in the album captioned, in the Duke's own hand, under the family name "Bertie".

After more than a decade in exile the former monarch wrote a unique set of memoirs, which were serialised in *Life* magazine and then published in a book, *A King's Story*. It contained a few photographs from the album – but none was the more intimate shots which will appear over the next five days in *The Independent*.

Today's selection, which were taken when the future king was around the age of 18, reveal the first signs in the thawing of the glacial royal reticence and aloofness which was the hallmark of the Victorian era. Evidence of the old rigidity was all around the young Edward. The photographs are peopled with stiff aunts encased in gowns of starch and whalebone, including Edward's great aunt, Princess Beatrice, daughter of Queen Victoria and the curse of historians since she took her mother's diaries, copied out the parts she considered edifying and burned the rest. Even in supposedly informal moments men like Lord Kitchener, pictured the year before he took up the post of Secretary of State for War, appear with spines of ramrod iron. And men like Lord Farquhar (who, whisper it quietly, later absconded with a large amount of other people's money) give no trace of impropriety in their bearing or countenance.

It was a world in which the women confined themselves to the lawn or the gravelled drive while the men, ill-equipped in tweed jackets with collars turned up, climbed to the tops of snow-blown mountains rode to hounds or set out in stag-hunting parties – Edward's younger brother George (the

Tomorrow: The death of innocence and a sudden war

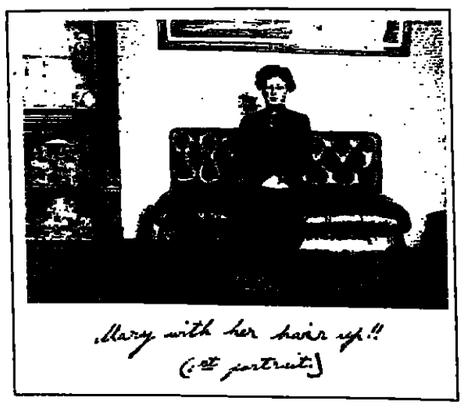
father of the present Duke of Kent) is pictured, his forehead smeared, after being "blooded" on one such outing. The setting was the family's massive Scottish estate which, in the imperial nomenclature of the age, was recorded as "Balmoral, NB"; the abbreviation stood for North Britain in an era when Scottish nationalism would have provoked incomprehension.

It was also a world which left its mark on young Edward. His father George V was the incarnation of the old world of order and stability, obsessed with tradition, propriety, decorum and punctuality he was, though kind-hearted, a martinet in his treatment of his son and heir. Edward's mother was evidently deficient in the normal maternal instincts. Neither were easily able to communicate with their children, who consequently suffered from a lack of human warmth and encouragement in early life. The man chosen to be the boy's tutor, Henry Peter Hansell, was supposed to make up for what his parents lacked: a good chap, and a good shot, he was a fairly hopeless tutor. Edward, though an intelligent and curious child with a powerful memory, was poorly educated and although a competent linguist, was never able to spell properly.

But it is the photographs of the young Prince John which tell the saddest story of the repressive royal rigidity of the era. The boy, about nine years old in the photographs here, was the youngest son of George V. When he was aged four he developed epilepsy. So discomfited were the royals at his disability that, throughout his short life, he was hidden away from the public, lest one of his fits should be seen and cause the royal household embarrassment. Their shame was so acute that he was kept in a separate house at Sandringham, for fear even that he should be seen by other house guests. His brothers and sisters, who demonstrated great affection for the child, were his only playmates. Only one photograph of him has ever been seen before today.

But it was a time in which the first signs of change were appearing. There are photographs of Edward's brother Harry – the first member of the royal family ever to go to school – at Eton. His sister Mary, though snapped "with her hair-up" in drawing room formality, is also pictured in softer mood flinging open her bedroom window. Edward displays a good eye for an unposed photograph throughout, but nowhere more so than in the set of pictures of Mary, Bertie and himself which he engagingly captioned "Queer Faces" in the album.

It was 1913, three years since Edward had become Prince of Wales and two since he became the first holder of that title to be formally invested at Caernarvon Castle. He was beginning to travel to broaden his education. He went to France and twice to German, to visit cousins who were the King and Queen of Württenberg, and to Denmark, the birthplace of his grandmother, Queen Alexandra. After four years in the Royal Navy, Edward went up to Magdalen College, Oxford where he joined the university's Officer Training Corps. Its manoeuvres seemed a jolly jape in those days. Only months later they would begin in earnest as the world was plunged unexpectedly into a war which was to change the face of British society and its monarchy with it.



Modern and ancient: Two portraits by the future King Edward VIII of his sister Mary, later Countess of Harewood, and mother of the opera impresario and author Lord Harewood

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THE INDEPENDENT
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the family who would disown him

Royal triptych: Edward's portraits of his brothers Harry, Bertie and George; and Edward (below) taking a picture (left) of the youngest of the family, John, who suffered epilepsy and was never seen in public

Easter at Windsor, 1914

'HPH': Edward's tutor Henry Peter Hansell

The poignant record of a vanished age

These albums are unique, says the historian **Michael Bloch**

When *The Independent* asked me to give my opinion on two photograph albums which had come into their temporary possession, allegedly from the collection of the Duke and Duchess of Windsor, I was frankly sceptical as to the degree of interest they would represent.

During the 1980s, when I worked in Paris for the Duchess's lawyer, Maitre Suzanne Blum, I had seen many photographs dealing with various aspects of their lives, selections from which I used in my books about them; and many pictures of them from other sources had been published since. Could the material I was about to see shed new light and justify publication in a national newspaper?

When I saw the albums, however, such doubts disappeared at once. There could be no doubt of their authenticity, or that they were among the most deeply personal records kept by the Duke. The first album portrayed his life with his family and friends and as an Oxford student when he was 19 during the year leading up to the First World War. The pictures were of superb quality, many of them extraordinarily intimate, and together they poignantly evoked a vanished age.

The second album, which had the words "THE FORT" embossed on the cover, was a record of his great labour of love during the early 1930s, when he restored Fort Belvedere, a fantastic folly near Windsor which had been granted to him by his father the King as a grace-and-favour residence, and created a garden there. It was there that his romance with the woman he loved, Wallis Simpson, had blossomed, and the second half of the album was full of amazing photographs of them together there: these started in 1932 or 1933, when Mrs Simpson first visited the Fort with her husband Ernest, and ended just before the Abdication with his last picture taken by King Edward VIII, depicting Wallis and her Aunt Bessie on the swimming pool terrace.

It was fascinating to contrast the two different worlds represented by the albums, 20 years apart but separated by the huge psychological gulf of the First World War. The first showed a world of order, regularity, formality and self-confidence. The second was a record of a more informal and unregulated world in which a generation which had been through a nightmare sought to enjoy life.

Shortly after the Duke of Windsor's death in 1972, the Duchess is said to have given these two albums to a valued personal friend as a keepsake of her late husband. It may seem extremely odd that the Duchess should have given away in this manner what were probably the most intimate and valuable of the many dozens of albums in her and the duke's collection, but it has to be said that there are other examples during her old age of her making impulsive gestures of this sort.

Michael Bloch is the editor of Wallis and Edward – Letters 1931-37 *and the author of* The Secret File of the Duke of Windsor.

Edward's aunt Princess Beatrice (left above) with George V and Queen Mary at Mar Lodge, near Balmoral. Edward's grandmother Queen Alexandra (right) with Princess Mary

Queen Mary (above) with the military potentate Lord Kitchener and (left) at Mar Lodge with Lord Farquhar, later involved in an honours scandal with David Lloyd-George

Unthinkable in the USSR. Unstageable today?

Back in the USSR, it was hard to know which was worse: to be on the receiving end of Stalin's criticisms or of his phone calls. *Paul Taylor* celebrates the censored career of Mikhail Bulgakov.

Alan Howard (above) as the mad, melancholic General Khludov in 'Flight'; and the Moscow Art Theatre's 1926 'White Guard' Ivan Kyncl/SCR Photo Library

Letter to Brezhnev was the name of a cheery British film of the Eighties that brought a pair of Liverpudlian chicken-gutters into romantic collision with a couple of Russian sailors. *A Phone Call from Stalin* – a rather more daunting proposition – would be a good title for any biopic about the brilliant playwright and novelist Mikhail Bulgakov (1891-1940). Such a movie would bring into collision a genius and the fickle, ruthless power of Soviet despotism.

In 1930 – in an act that was more a self-serving, artfully misleading propaganda coup than a gesture of kindness – Stalin picked up the receiver and made direct contact with Bulgakov. This was in reply to an impassioned letter in which the playwright outlined his frustration at the systematic way his efforts to be published or staged had been thwarted over the years. He presented himself as a crucified contradiction in terms: a man compelled towards satire in a state where the very idea of satire had been ruled out. "Am I thinkable in the USSR?" he asked, before concluding that the only solution would be expulsion for both him and his wife.

Bulgakov was, it can't be denied, imaginatively drawn towards his persecutor. As Nicholas Wright has eloquently put it, his insight into arbitrary power "amounted almost to rapport, like the relationship between the tyrant and the truth-teller you find in folk tales". For characteristically perverse reasons, Stalin had been a stout supporter of Bulgakov's early successful play *The White Guard*, a work set against the chaos of the Civil War and Communist revolution.

The censors had balked at what they regarded as the too sympathetic portrayal of a White counter-revolutionary family. Stalin, however, took the line that the play showed an intelligent and powerful enemy. "That is good. We must show the enemy as he is." Then, with a philistine deafness to the tone of this much-hacked-about piece, he declared that it constituted "a demonstration of the all-conquering power of Bolshevism". Which is a bit like saying that *Hamlet* is a demonstration of the all-conquering power of Norway.

But Stalin was the reverse of a fan of Bulgakov's stage masterpiece *Flight*, banned in 1928 as an "anti-Soviet phenomenon" and tomorrow receiving its belated British premiere in the Olivier, directed by Howard Davies. People in this country are familiar with Bulgakov mostly through *The Master and Margarita*, the posthumously-published proto-magical-realist novel that sends an elegant Devil on a visit to 1930s Moscow and becomes a powerful meditation on the survival power of manuscripts in a regime of terror.

Theatre-goers too have had the chance to see two Bulgakov plays courtesy of the RSC: *The White Guard* (in a late-1970s production starring Juliet Stevenson and Patrick Stewart) and *Molière* (starring Antony Sher), in which Bulgakov's position as a writer under Stalin is mirrored in the French dramatist's relations with the Sun King, Louis XIV, and his fall from favour through the machinations of a religious cabal out to wreak revenge for his freethinking, anti-clerical comedy *Tartuffe*. More recently, the National staged an adaptation of Bulgakov's *Black Snow*, a late, very funny *roman à clef* that charts his love-hate relationship with the Moscow Art Theatre, where he worked for a decade as a result of that phone call from Stalin and where his plays were subjected to gross mistreatment – months, sometimes years of rehearsal, followed by abortion or, at best, mangling at birth, then infanticide.

The laugh in *Black Snow*, though, is very much on the MAT's boss Stanislavsky. In one hilarious sequence, the groaning, hypochondriacal despot is seen rehearsing to the rigid dictates of his famous Method, forcing some poor actor to cycle round and round in a manner indicative of his love for an adjacent woman. "Empty," declares the dissatisfied maestro. "You were riding emptily, instead of being filled with your beloved."

Yet, if Bulgakov is no unknown over here, there's still a thrill of uncertainty at the National about whether audiences will be ready for *Flight*. Subtitled "A Play in Eight Dreams", it's a phantasmagoria that keeps tragi-farcical track of the White army and ill-assorted refugees as they blunder around in ignominious retreat from the Reds, flee into exile in Constantinople and Paris; and then – in a bitter-sweet coda – feel the nostalgic magnet of Mother Russia pulling them into a possibly suicidal return. It requires a huge cast and a huge stage, and so leaves the National with a huge number of seats to fill.

"I said to Howard Davies, 'This is a combination of Albert Speer and Steven Spielberg'," recalls the play's adapter, the Ulster-born dramatist Ron (*Rat in the Skull*) Hutchinson, and he should know because he is currently on a two-year contract with Spielberg's Dreamworks. The cinematic quality of this "Big Dissolute Symphony" – its heady profligacy with resources, its use of fades and sound dissolves from one "dream" to the next – mark it out, for Hutchinson, as the work of a man who had been "exposed to that first real wave of narrative-driven movies".

It's also the work of a man who, recalling life in his native Kiev in the turbulent days of revolution and civil war, could comment dryly: "The inhabitants of Kiev reckon that there were 18 changes of power. Some stay-at-home memoirists counted up to 12 of them; I can tell you that there were precisely 14; and, what's more, I personally lived through 12 of them." What Hutchinson, in a marvellous phrase, calls "the suddenness and insouciance" of Bulgakov's dramaturgy stems from this experience of being on the wrong, cocked-up end of history.

Flight plunges you into a world gone bananas, where, as Hutchinson says, "all these characters are walking around with one of those cartoon anvils – 20 lbs – over their heads and, as soon as they say anything, *Bang!* something lands on them." It's a stunned universe where "nobody knows what happened three afternoons ago", where a paranoid deputy trade minister can deny all knowledge of his wife, who consequently wanders the earth saddled with the unjust reputation of being a Bolshevik spy; and where craven generals hang anything that moves and then are haunted by hanged men.

Hutchinson loved the technical and moral daring of the piece – the way it conveys "the casual way in which life is disposed right, left and centre", without coarsening into heartlessness. "It take the audience on a literal journey, but also on a box-of-tricks journey. Bulgakov says, 'What about a cockroach race? All right, damn it, we'll do it'."

He means a sequence in the Constantinople "dream" where the Russian *émigrés* make money and create a diversion for themselves by organising cockroach races and taking bets from the locals: "Please place your bets. The favourite pastime of the court of the late Tsar and Tsarina, never before seen outside the walls of the imperial residences". When I ask how they intend to stage this episode, Hutchinson recalls once having seen a playscript in which "a cockroach had, on command, to run up a character's arm, round his neck and down his other arm. I'd have paid £25 to see that any night of the week."

Stalin condemned *Flight* as an attempt to stimulate pity "for certain sections amongst the most contemptible anti-Soviet *émigrés*" and people within the Moscow Art Theatre would have been happy if Bulgakov's refugees had wanted to return not for deep sentimental reasons – the sight of the Nevsky, the exhilarating experience of feeling cold again – but because they had seen the error of their ways and now longed to live in an improved and morally improving society. The play was not performed in the USSR until 1957, well after its author's death.

But the Soviet dictator was to dog Bulgakov to the bitter end. In his final year, the harassed, censored dramatist was presented with the dreadful dilemma of being asked to write a play to mark Stalin's 60th birthday. How could he oblige and keep his integrity? By composing a play that dealt with Stalin's leadership qualities early on in his career? At all events, the result, *Batum*, did not meet with the dictator's approval and the nervous strain effectively destroyed Bulgakov's health. The whirligig of time has happily brought its revenges. The statues of Stalin have been pulled down, while on the page and on the stage Bulgakov lives on.

'Flight' opens tomorrow at the RNT's Olivier Theatre. Booking: 0171-928 2252

A true Shakespearian fight for survival

For want of a grant totalling just 0.02 per cent of the cost of the Millennium Dome, the Greenwich Theatre, South-East London's only rep company, faces closure. *David Benedict* watches what may well be its last production.

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You can tell a great deal about a Shakespeare production by its fight scenes. All too often the fight director takes over, inserts a few bits of athletic swordplay, and then the director moves back in charge and the acting starts up again. Not here. Malcolm Ransom's fight between Mercutio and Tybalt is impressively lusty and well-paced but the secret of its success is its unexpected comedy. We've all seen amateur shows where sliding a sword between an opponent's arm and chest gives the thoroughly unconvincing illusion of killing. I've never seen it used as a smart gag to fool the opponent.

This surprising use of humour is just one of the many strengths of Rupert Goold's boisterous, updated staging of *Romeo and Juliet* for the Greenwich Theatre, which is itself fighting for its life after having its London Arts Board grant cut. Indeed, I have never seen a staging that finds so much humour in this famously tragic play. As the servant Peter, the company clown – stand-up comic Laurence Howarth – works big laughs by playing both in character and to the audience. Instead of a typically elderly and irritating nurse, the excellent young Clare Cathcart combines a tough no-nonsense approach with a larky sense of fun and a broad Ulster accent that makes her words positively bounce.

Final curtain call? Romeo & Juliet in Greenwich

There are times when Goold's dedication to pace means running slipshod over text. John Marquez's Benvolio is cleverly conceived as a nervy, cocksure cockney lad but, while his rapid nasal delivery works as characterisation, the richness of the lines is too often flattened out. Perhaps he and Goold should have taken Friar Laurence's advice, "Wisely and slow; they stumble that do run fast."

The vivid characterisation, though, sets this apart from the recent RSC version. There you were made to understand every line but real dramatic impetus was lacking. Here, in most cases, there's a vivid sense of what makes these people tick. Tim Hardy's shambling Capulet, for example, is part of a carefully realised household failing to deal with Kate Fleetwood's forthright Juliet. Nicholas Irons is rather less successful as Romeo: best at displaying self-absorption and self-pity, his slightly flailing physicality signals his inability to fully inhabit and shape the role.

Act 5 gives off a whiff of under-rehearsal: there's an over-reliance on music and the deft directorial insights can descend to tricksiness (qv Paris's slow-motion death). Still, Goold scores full marks for bravery. Only 25, he has a bright future ahead of him. If this unfailingly interesting staging marks the close of a theatre willing and able to mount work of such imagination, it will be nothing short of a scandal.

To 28 March (booking: 0181-858 7755). Donations to: Greenwich Theatre Recovery Fund, Crooms Hill, London SE10 8ES

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Price is right for the house that Gianni built

Long before Gianni Versace began courting rock stars to wear his clothes, Antony Price was dressing Roxy Music and the Rolling Stones. Now, as the house of Versace looks for a new couture designer to step into its founder's shoes, London-based Price has emerged as a front-runner. *Tamsin Blanchard* meets a man for whom fashion doesn't end at size eight and whose clients love the way he treats their curves.

The photographer is crouched on the floor telling Antony Price he will look great. "Not from that angle I won't, darling! You should never shoot people with long faces from below." This is the man who has spent his working life making women look beautiful. Now that he is rumoured to be on Donatella Versace's most-wanted list to design the company's *haute couture* collection, the camera flash is being directed at him and not at Jerry Hall, Tara Palmer Tomkinson or any of the of the fabulous women who inhabit his clothes. And he wants to be shown in the best light possible. After all, he is only too aware that the fickle finger of fashion will point at him fleetingly.

If he gets the Versace job, Mr Price will enjoy a few more months of frenzied press calls and photo sessions. If he doesn't, he knows that frenzy will fizzle and die and as he says, he will be "put back in the cupboard." He jokes he feels like "Sleeper" or a "nice carriage lamp being pulled out for inspection on *Antiques Roadshow*", but is making the most of it and enjoying taunting panting fashion editors with barbed comments like: "Where have you been the past decade?"

They dare not turn the question on him. He is too formidable a designer. And besides, since his last show in 1991, he has been doing what he's always done, and will continue doing, with or without Versace: designing special one-off dresses for the wives and girlfriends of wealthy men.

Surgical skill: Antony Price Photograph: Andrew Lamb

He has become known as the creator of "straight men's fantasies." And he is under no illusions that the men who spend £3,000 upwards on a dress for the love of their life want her to look as though she goes in and out in all the right places. This might strike you as totally un-PC and out of tune with the times, and it is. But the fact remains that such clients exist and the female partner's own fantasy is often the same as her husband's.

Anna Harvey, deputy editor of *Vogue*, says the secret of Antony's success is that he really has always admired the female form. He is not in any way vulgar, never revealing in an overtly sexy way." Josephine Fairley, owner of Knightsbridge boutique, A La Mode, has sold Antony Price as ready-to-wear with prices starting at £1,000 for a dress, since the shop opened 11 years ago. He is the one designer who has stayed with her all these years, a feat in itself. "He makes women look wonderful without looking tarty. They flatter the female figure in the best possible manner. They are glamorous." When a woman tries on an Antony Price dress, she has to buy it. "She knows that to get the same look, she would have to spend thousands at Harley Street, or months with a personal trainer."

Certainly, a consultation with Antony Price at his World's End studio is akin to a visit to the plastic surgeon. "I see myself as a frock doctor," he says. "My clients have to get more or less naked in front of me. I feel I'm like a surgeon in some ways." The designer has a unique way of working. After a client has showed her commitment by paying 50 per cent of the price in advance, ("that will cover the cost of making a dress – an escape clause in case she changes her mind") Price gently gets on with the work of recreating her in papier maché. His studio is filled with papier maché torsos, both male and female, of clients, so that they are around whenever a fitting is required. The method works well, especially for overseas clients. "The papier maché casts pick up everything: the shape, the stance, the posture." They range in size from a buxom amazon woman made out of chicken wire, to a tiny slip of a girl with no hips and pancake breasts pasted together out of pages of newspapers.

Quite how Versace's most finnicky customers would react to being requested to strip off and made into a mould like a giant shoe last is uncertain. But they would be guaranteed clothes that fit like the proverbial glove and after their first fitting, they wouldn't have to go back for more. Antony Price is a hands-on designer. Although he specialises in evening and occasion wear, he began life as a menswear designer with Sterling Cooper. "I'm incredibly good at tailoring," he says completely matter of fact. "If a woman wants to get rid of her bust and hips, I can do it." And you believe him. He is not a man prone to exaggerating his own talent. He simply knows he is good. "I'm an expert pattern cutter and fitter, and I'm also a good machinist," he says in the same sentence that he also tells me he is good at dry stone walling, hair and make-up and electricals, in short, streets ahead of anyone else. "There are certain clients who wonder why you're stooping with a mouthful of pins. I will actually lie on the floor to pin a hem and they'll expect me to have some minion doing it for me. They don't understand that it's better that I do it. They wouldn't expect a surgeon to stand back and watch as an assistant did the work."

Price's clients do not all have figures like Jerry Hall, either before or after four children. He might design "straight men's fantasies" and his sketches of women might look like fierce creatures, but he has a great understanding of the female psyche and the way women perceive their own bodies. His fantasy woman might be scary but she is also real - she has hips and curves and a bum. There would be no challenge otherwise. "Women love waists," he says. "But when you go in, you gotta go out again, and they don't like that. They're obsessed with the smallness of their bums. Every woman will apologise for the size of her bum as she walks through the door."

Small bums or big bums, Antony Price is not deterred. While other designers want a woman to conform to their pin thin sketches, Price positively enjoys designing to make her look good. It's all about proportions. "I have customers who are a size 24," he boasts, berating the fashion industry for ignoring larger women. "It's our job to alter her proportions, to find her something she will look good in. Something like 60 per cent of women in this country are classified as overweight and the fashion industry has turned its back on them." As well as being a wide range of shapes and sizes, Price's customers also range from age from 16 to 60. And without fail, he says, they want to look like a size eight.

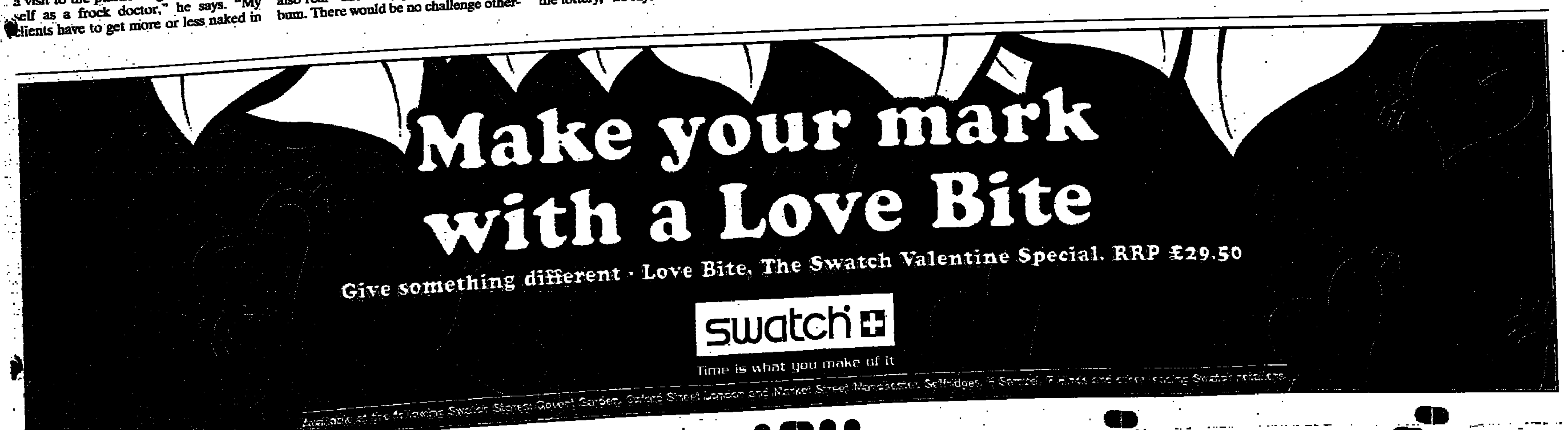
Compared to Paris or Rome, the London *couture* scene is small and low-key. But it is precisely that reason that women are increasingly choosing to ignore the over-hyped luxury clothing market in Paris and shop instead with British *couturiers* like Price. These days he is working with women who travel from Paris for consultations: the British *couture* scene – designers like Bruce Oldfield, Catherine Walker and Bellville Sassoon, as well as newer names including Deborah Milner and Victor Edelstein protégé, Marco Matysik – is thriving. Price's last show was in 1991, "before the money ran out" and he hit hard times, forced to sell up his Kennington studio where exotic birds flew wild, spreading their plumage as Price's customers spread theirs. Unlike some of the French houses, Price says he is "trying to sell clothes, not perfume or cosmetics." At any one time, he works on clothes for about 10 clients, not bad, considering some of the world's most famous French houses probably have half that number per season. Ready for some last-minute hand-finishing, an oyster satin-backed crepe wedding suit hangs in a clear plastic bag. It is for the client's second wedding, a lace dress and matching jacket with lace inserts. Price's friend, Philip Treacy, will make the hat.

Antony Price is perhaps an obscure name for Versace, at 52, considerably too old to be classed as one of London's young guns, like Antonio Berardi, another who is said to be under consideration. But he is one who would make great sense. "It would be the perfect marriage," agrees Josephine Fairley. Long before Gianni and his sister began courting celebrities to wear his clothes and attend his fashion extravaganzas each season in Paris, Antony Price was dressing Roxy Music and the Rolling Stones, and they were not only flocking to his shows, they were buying the clothes as well.

Price himself was one of the first designers to stage theatrical extravaganza fashion shows that not only featured his own team of super models – Jerry Hall, Marie Helvin, and Yasmin Le Bon – but featured star-studded audiences as well. "I'm partly responsible for the marriage of rock and fashion," he says. "When I started out, rock people thought fashion people were snobby and fashion people though the music industry grubby and dirty." The relationship was not in any way cultivated. It was simply because Antony happened to be friends with Bryan, Simon, Mick and co. They wouldn't miss "Tone's show" for anything.

Ultimately, Price has a realistic view of his world and the truth behind the glitz. If he doesn't get the Versace job, he knows he will never have that sort of money for his own label. "It would be easier to win the lottery," he says.

Jerry Hall wears Antony Price (above). Dresses from Price's couture collections (below) Photographs: Chris Moore



Halldór Laxness

Halldór Gudjonsson (Halldór Laxness), writer: born Reykjavik, Iceland 23 April 1902; married 1930 Ingibjörg Einarsdottir (one son; marriage dissolved), 1945 Audur Sveinsdottir (two daughters); died Leikjalundur, Iceland 8 February 1998.

First-time visitors to Iceland are well advised to read in translation, before they go there, one or two of the Old Icelandic sagas, if only to get a fuller idea of the country they are visiting than maps or photographs can provide. By 1955, when he won the Nobel Prize for Literature, Halldór Laxness would probably have agreed. In his formal acceptance of the prize, he stated: "It is a great good fortune for an author to be born into a nation so steeped in centuries of poetry and literary tradition."

He had not always been so proud of his literary inheritance, however; indeed, his relationship with the sagas was like that of many children with their parents: first one of out-and-out rebellion, and only later developing, through reconciliation, into one of fruitful partnership. "I have nothing to learn from them," he wrote in 1923 of "those old Icelandic fogeys", the authors of the sagas; it was their emphasis on externals, on "the drawing of contours" that he mainly complained of. Not until 1945 did he express the view that "an Icelandic writer cannot survive without constantly having the ancient books in his thoughts".

Laxness's first major novel, *The Great Weaver from Kashmir* (1927), which is largely autobiographical, reflects his short-lived but fervent devotion to Catholicism, while *The Book of the People* (1929), a collection of radical essays, shows his subsequent commitment to socialism. These two books, with the ideas that inspired them, form an essential preface to his later writing, and in particular to the epic novels of the Thirties for which he is best known: *Salka Valka* (1931-32), the story of a young girl growing up in an Icelandic fishing village in which socialist ideas are also slowly gaining ground; *Independent People* (1934-35), in which the main character, an Icelandic small farmer, gradually develops into a tragic hero; and *World Light* (1937-40), the story of a penniless folk-poet who for all his oddities and comic failings nevertheless symbolises a profound poetic integrity.

In all these works the element of religious fervour, inherited from his involvement with Catholicism, combines with Laxness's stern social criticism, giving it vitality and universal significance, and reveals itself in the vivid descriptions of Icelandic nature.

His subsequent novels include *The Bell of Iceland* (1943-46), about the struggle of Icelandic culture for survival in the 17th and 18th centuries; *The Atom Station* (1948), about the impingement of foreign influences on Icelandic culture just after the Second World War; *The Happy Warriors* (1952), in which a viking-age setting is used to criticise modern warfare and naïve modern responses to the sagas; *The Fish Can Sing* (1957), a nostalgic evocation of life in Reykjavik at the turn of the century; *Paradise Reclaimed* (1960), about an Icelander's eventual discovery of paradise at home in Iceland after a long involvement with Mormonism abroad; and *Christianity at Glacier* (1968), in which Christianity is viewed in relation to other ways and kinds of life, animal as well as human. Many of Laxness's novels are informed by the spirit of Taoism, with which he was already acquainted when *The Great Weaver* was published.

While it as a novelist that he will mainly be remembered, his work also includes a book of poems, eight plays, four books of memoirs and numerous essays and speeches, all of which, together with the novels, form a fascinating commentary on the century his life so nearly spanned. He has been praised by one of his non-Icelandic readers for "placing Iceland in the midst of the world" in his writing, and it is true that, while his point of view is always distinctively Icelandic, it never fails to incorporate an international, universal dimension.

Two of the characters in his novels – characters into which Laxness clearly put much of himself – express the wish to inhabit the mountains and marshes of Iceland after death; and visitors to Iceland may be encouraged to add the novels of Laxness that have been translated into English, some of them by Magnus Magnusson, to their preparatory reading, for just as the spirit of the sagas lives on forever in that magnificent landscape, so will that of Halldór Laxness.

– Rory McTurk

Laxness: 'placed Iceland in the midst of the world'

Chris Philip

Michael Christopher Philip, book editor and fireworks impresario: born London 7 September 1928; died Bartestree, Herefordshire 10 January 1998.

For gardeners, *The Plant Finder* is the most useful invention since the trowel. First published in 1987, and since then annually, it is already indispensable. Like all pivotal ideas it seems supremely obvious: simply to list all plants and shrubs available in Britain, and where to obtain them. But it took a man of immense drive and application to turn the idea into reality.

Chris Philip was an archetypal polymath. Educated at Oundle, he decided not to go into the family firm of atlas publishers, George Philip & Son, but instead became interested in the burgeoning field of electronics. He began his career with EMI, then took a job with a recording studio close to Broadcasting House in London.

Philip: down-to-earth

In 1952 he met Denys Guéroult, a BBC music producer, and they remained together for more than 45 years. Being a gay couple in the Fifties required discretion and fortitude. Friends say it was the attraction of opposites. Where Guéroult is outgoing to the point of flamboyance, Philip was reserved. He hated parties because he found that small talk interfered with his train of thought as he grappled with whatever enterprise currently monopolised his attention.

When commercial television began in 1955 he joined Lew Grade's ATV, holder of the London Weekend franchise, as transmission controller. He impressed Grade with his practical, down-to-earth approach. When the company decided it needed an on-screen clock, he bought one in Soho for less than £2 and mounted it in a simple box. It told viewers the time between programmes for several years.

Becoming bored with television, in 1962 he turned himself into a tough theatrical agent, bullying impresarios into paying his clients more than they intended. A few years later his career took another twist when, on holiday in Malta, he became intrigued by the elaborate splendour of locally made fireworks.

He was appalled to find that they could not be imported into Britain because the authorities claimed they contained a hazardous mix of chemicals. Philip arranged for the scientific analysis of British-made fireworks and established that they included the same ingredients.

As a result, the ban was lifted. He set up a company, Festival Fireworks, that organised spectacular displays all over the world, notably the one outside Buckingham Palace for the Queen's Silver Jubilee in 1977. He developed ingenious systems to ensure that the shows could always go on, even in pouring rain. At the same time he built up a library of books on fireworks, then published a unique bibliography of fireworks literature.

This venture, involving the creation of a meticulous database, paved the way for his crowning achievement. In 1983 he and Guéroult bought a house in Worcestershire with a six-acre garden. Its previous owner was a daffodil collector who had dug up all his bulbs, leaving the garden a barren waste.

Guéroult, the keener gardener of the two, seeking to restock it with a variety of plants and shrubs, was frustrated to discover that there was no comprehensive guide to suppliers of particular varieties. So Philip doggedly set to work to compile one, starting by writing to more than 2,000 nurseries for their catalogues.

The first edition of *The Plant Finder* listed some 20,000 plants. The latest has 70,000, derived from nearly 800 nurseries. Now published by the Royal Horticultural Society and selling more than 40,000 copies a year, it has become not just a buyers' guide but a recognised authority on plant nomenclature. It has also encouraged the growth of new specialist nurseries, now that there is a reliable means of reaching potential customers. Just before his death, Philip was awarded the RHS's Veitch Memorial Gold Medal for his contribution to horticulture.

"When he wanted to do something he would not be stopped," says Guéroult. "He would carry it through to the end, regardless. In all the jobs I've known him do, you only had to tell him it couldn't be done, and he'd find a way to do it." Long hours at the computer screen probably contributed to his worsening sight in recent years, and possibly to the brain tumour diagnosed last May. From then, a remorseless physical and mental decline culminated in his death in a hospice last month.

– Michael Leapman

Falco

Johann Holzel (Falco), singer-songwriter: born Vienna 19 February 1957; married (one daughter; marriage dissolved); died Puerto Plata, Dominican Republic 6 February 1998.

For a fairly small country, Austria has produced an incredible number of classical composers. Yet the land of Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Liszt and Strauss has never made much of an impact on the pop charts. Falco bridged the two musical genres and had two world-wide hits in the Eighties with "*Der Kommissar*" and, most famously, "Rock Me Amadeus".

Johann Holzel, born in 1957, grew up in Vienna and was something of a child prodigy. When he was 16, he went to the Vienna Conservatoire but found the experience frustrating.

In the late Seventies, he played bass guitar in jazz and bar bands like Spinning Wheel. Under various pseudonyms (John Hudson, John DiFalco), he also appeared with Drahdiwaberl, an Austrian group whose shock tactics and stage antics were recently documented on Channel 4's *Eurotrash*.

He soon secured a guest spot featuring one of his songs, "*Ganz Wien*" (literally "All Vienna"). Ostensibly about heroin chic in the Austrian capital, it had a line, "All Vienna is on heroin today", which used to bring the house down, and he was approached to record it as a solo artist in 1981. He picked the name Falco because, "it sounded better. It means the falcon."

The song gained further notoriety and was, of course, banned by the Austrian authorities, thus contributing to its success. Falco then worked with the producer Robert Ponger to complete *Einzelhaft* ("Incarcerated"), his début album. This featured the hooky, spooky "*Der Kommissar*" which became a major hit across Europe. The British rockers After the Fire (featuring Peter Banks, formerly keyboard-player with Yes) covered the song and stole his thunder, scoring a Top Five hit in the States in 1983.

Undeterred, Falco soldiered on with *Jung Roemer* ("Young Romans") and in 1985 hooked up with the Dutch producers Robe and Ferdi Bolland for *Falco 3*. Needing a catchy single, he fell back on an idea he had had years before.

For a long time (even before Milos Forman directed the Oscar-winning *Amadeus*), he had been fascinated by "Mozart as a punk", by the idea of the mad, decadent star with the great talent and the miserable end. Add a few synthesisers, a sprinkling of Viennese clichés, a striking video (with his old pals from Drahdiwaberl) and you have "Rock Me Amadeus", an enormous global hit in 1986.

"Vienna Calling" and the anthemic "Jeanny", also from *Falco 3*, entered the charts too, but the pressure for a follow-up album was on. Eventually Falco fell back on another Austrian cliché and released "The Sound of Musik" and further played on his international playboy image with "*Les Nouveaux Riches*", both from the *Emotional* album.

This and further albums like *Data De Groove*, *Wiener Blut* and a 1991 remix collection were nowhere near as successful but the "Amadeus" royalties were still coming in to keep Falco in the lifestyle to which he'd become accustomed. He worked on pilots for a television series and, for tax purposes, set up base in the Dominican Republic. He was in the process of building his own recording studio there when his Jeep collided with a bus. He died later in hospital.

According to the musician Thomas Lang, a long-time Falco associate and collaborator, he will be remembered "not as the biggest Austrian pop star but as the only Austrian pop star. He made it out of nowhere and sometimes played up the arrogant, *nouveau-riche* rock star. But he was very intelligent, very charismatic, very entertaining."

– Pierre Perrone

Falco: 'Rock me, Amadeus'

Enoch Powell

Enoch Powell was still opposition spokesman on defence matters when I invited him to lecture at Birmingham University, *writes Professor Douglas Johnson* [further to the obituary by Patrick Cosgrave and Professor Denis Kavanagh, 9 February]. He arrived well in time and he suggested that we should go for a walk around the university. As he had not yet become an object of student hostility our walk was peaceful and I enjoyed our conversation. He asked lots of questions, we spoke about universities and the study of history and he talked about the King Edward's schools in Birmingham, about Unitarians and Quakers.

But all this came to an abrupt stop when we reached the house on Edgbaston Park Road which bore the sign "Shakespeare Institute". "What's this?" he hissed at me, with noticeable disapproval. After I had explained, he became scathing. "You don't believe in the boy from Stratford, do you?" He was transformed. There was a wild gleam in his eyes, he gesticulated, and quotations from the plays poured out, each one demonstrating that the author was a statesman with experience of power rather than "the boy from Stratford". Eventually I had to interrupt this flow and point to "Joe", the university clock-tower, so called because it had been built at the request of Joe Chamberlain. We walked to the lecture room, with Mr Powell telling stories about Joseph Chamberlain and his two sons.

In 1989 both Enoch Powell and I attended a conference in Paris on "The Rights of Man" organised by several leading European newspapers (the *Independent* representing Great Britain). One evening we were walking back to our hotel when a man barred Mr Powell from passing. "You're Enoch Powell, the leader of the extreme right in England," he said aggressively in French. "Not at all," replied Powell, also in French. "I was beaten in the elections," and we walked on.

He told me that he was frequently accosted in public by people who wanted to show their disapproval of him. His method was to say, "Oh dear, people are always mistaking me for that fellow." Usually they would then apologise and go away.

That evening we had dinner at the Closerie des Lilas in Montparnasse. I told him that Lenin, Trotsky, Picasso and others went to eat there. He asked questions. He did not seem unduly impressed. But his attitude changed when I showed him the statue of Marshall Ney which stands near to the restaurant in the avenue where he was shot by a firing squad for having gone over to Napoleon during the Hundred Days. Powell remembered that Ney was called "the bravest of the brave". He looked carefully at the statue, repeating the words "the bravest of the brave". Once again he was transformed.

Enoch Powell was amongst the most stimulating and attractive people whom I have ever met.

I worked with Enoch Powell on a number of BBC programmes, literary as well as parliamentary, *writes Anne Symonds*. His subject was Shakespeare's political views. The titles were, characteristically, *The Chord of Patriotism*, *The Politics of Intrigue* and *The Love of Honour*. He wrote about the pursuit of power and the anatomy of ambition, just at the moment when the Conservative Party was in the desperate throes of seeking a successor to the Prime Minister, Mr Macmillan:

> Wherever supreme power is, the same troupe of personalities dances around it like the figures on a revolving lantern . . . The stage used to be called the Court, now they call it a Cabinet. But all the characters are in Shakespeare . . . True, in Shakespeare there is bloodshed, the headman's axe, the dagger and the sword. These political instruments are at present disused but, this difference of detail apart, the rest is drawn from real unchanging life. Only the costumes date.

His admiration for this insight into the machinations of politics forced him to the belief that the country bumpkin from Stratford could not possibly have been the writer of the works that bear his name.

It was not just these plots that fascinated Powell, but the language, too. He seemed at one time interested in pursuing a textual analysis. Take a line in *Hamlet*, for example: the Ghost refers to "the fat weed that roots itself in ease on Lethe wharf". Powell changed this to "rots itself in ease", which is so magnificently more revoltingly decadent.

His programme, *Great Parliamentary Occasions*, was published in 1960 as a book. Sadly, it does not include one of the greatest parliamentary occasions this century: his speech in the Hola Camp massacre debate. Powell once wrote that a nation should measure its civilised status by the way it treats its old and its prisoners. In the Hola debate he spoke brilliantly and bravely for prisoners – black prisoners.

He has been criticised for once declaring a wish to have died in the war. But this is a recurring wish of poets. Coleridge mourned his own survival when "Many men so beautiful all dead around did lie." A sentiment repeated by G.K. Chesterton; and Wilfred Owen wrote: "Red lips are not so red as the stained stones kissed by the English dead." The pain of the survivor is seldom logical, but Enoch the great logician could be passionately illogical, too.

Patrick Cosgrave is incorrect in stating that Enoch Powell "became the youngest Brigadier in the Army", *writes Graham Cooke*. In 1943, at the age of 30, Michael Calvert was promoted to Brigadier. This great fighting soldier commanded one of the brigades that fought in Burma in General Orde Wingate's second Chindit campaign in 1944, the year that Enoch Powell, who was a year older than Calvert, became a Brigadier.

Maurice Schumann, politician, died Paris 10 February, aged 86. BBC Radio's voice of the Free French in the Second World War; French foreign minister 1969-73. [An obituary follows.]

Cardinal Eduardo Francisco Pironio, died Rome 5 February, aged 77. Bishop of Mar del Plata, Argentina; a Cardinal from 1976, he was twice one of the "*papabili*" in 1978.

BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS

DEATHS

BAGGULEY: May Bagguley (née Harrison) of Kegworth died on Saturday 7 February after a long illness. Funeral service at Kegworth Parish Church on Monday 16 February at 11.15am followed by cremation. No flowers please but donations would be appreciated for Staunton Harold Hospice c/o A.W. Lynn, West Park House, Lime Grove, Long Eaton, Nottingham. 0115 9463093.

HOME-RIGG: John, died peacefully at St John's Hospice on 6 February 1998, aged 95 years. Much-loved father of Jennifer Bute. Funeral at Mortlake Crematorium at 12 noon on 12 February. Donations to RSPB.

WILLIAMSON: Peacefully at home with his family on 5 February, Leslie John Williamson, aged 67 years. Beloved husband of Gwen, father of Tim and grandfather of Charlie. He will be sadly missed by all who knew him. The funeral service will be held at St Michael's Church, Highgate, London N6 at 2pm on Tuesday 17 February followed by interment at Highgate Cemetery. A single flower and a donation payable to "Shelter" may be sent to Leverton & Sons Ltd, 212 Eversholt Street, London NW1 1BD. Telephone 0171-387 6075.

Announcements for Gazette BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS should be sent in writing to the Gazette Editor, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL, telephoned to 0171-293 2012 or faxed to 0171-293 2010. Charges are £6.50 a line (VAT extra).

Birthdays

Mr Richard Allan MP, 32; Sir John Arbuthnot, former MP, 86; Sir Ronald Arculus, former diplomat, 75; Vice-Admiral Sir Peter Berger, former bursar, Selwyn College, Cambridge, 73; Professor Marilyn Butler, Rector, Exeter College, Oxford, 61; Sir Alexander Cairncross, former Master, St Peter's College, Oxford, 87; Mr Bevan Congdon, cricketer, 60; Mr Christopher Dearnley, organist, 68; Mr Patrick Leigh Fermor, author, 83; Sir Archibald Forster, former chairman and chief executive, Esso UK, 70; Sir Vivian Fuchs, Antarctic explorer, 90; Mr William Fullerton, ambassador to Morocco and Mauretania, 59; Mr Bryan Gould, Vice-Chancellor, Waikato University, 59; Miss Anne Gregg, broadcaster, 58; Mr Win Griffiths MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary, Welsh Office, 55; Mr Michael Jackson, chief executive and director of programmes, Channel 4, 40; General Sir Jeremy Mackenzie, Deputy Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, 58; Mr Leslie Nielsen, actor, 72; Miss Mary Quant, fashion designer, 64; Mr Burt Reynolds, actor, 62; Baroness Sharples, former director, TVS, 75; Mr Dennis Skinner MP, 66; Miss Kim Stanley, film actress, 73; Mr John Surtees, motor and motor-cycle racing champion, 64; Mr E.W. Swanton, writer and commentator, 91; Miss Mary Tregear, art historian, 74; Mr Malcolm Walker, chairman and chief executive, Iceland Group, 52.

Anniversaries

Births: William Henry Fox Talbot, photographic pioneer, 1800; Thomas Alva Edison, inventor, 1847; Joseph Leo Mankiewicz, director, producer and screenwriter, 1909. **Deaths:** Jean-Bernard Léon Foucault, physicist, 1868; John Buchan, first Baron Tweedsmuir, novelist and governor-general of Canada, 1940; Sergei Mikhailovich Eisenstein, film director, 1948; Alfred Ernest Jones, psychoanalyst, 1958; Sylvia Plath, poet, 1963; Henry Mayo Bateman, cartoonist, 1970. **On this day:** Mrs Margaret Thatcher became the first woman leader of a British political party, 1975; Nelson Mandela was released from prison after 27 years, 1990. **Today** is the Feast Day of St Benedict of Aniane, St Caedmon, St Gregory II, Pope, St Lazarus of Milan, St Lucius of Adrianople, St Pascal I, Pope, Saints Saturninus, Dativus, and Others and St Severinus of Agaunum.

Lectures

Victoria and Albert Museum: Sarah Bowles, "Marquetry in Holland and England I", 2.30pm.
Wallace Collection: Peter Hughes, "Clocks by André-Charles Boulle", 1pm.

ROYAL ENGAGEMENTS

The Queen visits the United Kingdom Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting, Portland Place, London W1. The Duke of Edinburgh, President and Honorary Life Fellow of the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce, holds a President's Forum at Buckingham Palace.

Changing of the Guard

The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment mounts the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 11am.

LAW REPORT: 11 FEBRUARY 1998

Pre-emptive costs orders should be exceptional

The court should exercise its *discretion to make pre-emptive costs orders in cases involving public interest challenges only in the most exceptional circumstances.*

Regina v Lord Chancellor, ex parte *Child Poverty Action Group*; Regina v Director of Public Prosecutions, ex parte Bull (for and on behalf of Amnesty International UK) and another; Queen's Bench Division Crown Office List (Mr Justice Dyson) 6 February 1998

The court refused interlocutory applications in judicial review proceedings for orders that no orders as to costs should be made against the applicants, whatever the outcome of the proceedings.

The Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) sought judicial review of the Lord Chancellor's decision not to extend legal aid to some cases before Social Security Tribunals and Commissioners. Amnesty International UK and the Redress Trust both sought judicial review of the decision of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) not to prosecute two men for possession of an electro-shock baton without a licence, contrary to section 5(1)(b) of the Firearms Act 1968.

In both sets of proceedings the respondents had refused to agree in advance not to seek an order for costs against the applicants if their applications for judicial review were dismissed, and the applicants had accordingly applied for pre-emptive costs orders.

Richard Drabble QC and Rabinder Singh (David Thomas, CPAG) for CPAG; Philip Sales (Treasury Solicitor) for the Lord Chancellor; Ben Emmerson and Phillippa Kaufmann (Public Law Project) for Amnesty; Murray Hunt (Public Law Project) for the Redress Trust; Philip Havers (Crown Prosecution Service) for the DPP.

Mr Justice Dyson said that both respondents conceded that there was jurisdiction under section 51 of the Supreme Court Act 1981 to make pre-emptive costs orders, but there was no agreement as to the principles which should guide the court in deciding whether to make such orders in judicial review cases which concerned "public interest challenges". In private litigation, the general rule was that costs followed the event.

The essential characteristics of a public law challenge were that it raised public law issues which were of general importance, where the applicant had no private interest in the outcome of the case.

The applicants submitted that it was now recognised by the courts that the true nature of the court's role in public interest challenge cases was not to determine the rights of individual applicants, but to ensure that public bodies did not exceed or abuse their powers. If the courts did not make pre-emptive costs orders in such cases, genuine public interest challenges could effectively be stifled, unless the executive agreed in advance not to seek its costs whatever the outcome of the proceedings.

The discretion to make pre-emptive costs orders even in cases involving public interest challenges should, however, be exercised only in the most exceptional circumstances. The principle which lay behind the general rule that costs followed the event promoted discipline within the litigation system, compelling parties to assess carefully for themselves the strength of any claim.

The necessary conditions for the making of a pre-emptive costs order in a public interest challenge case were that the court was satisfied that the issues raised were truly ones of general public importance, and that it had a sufficient appreciation of the merits of the claim to be able to conclude that it was in the public interest to make the order.

The court must also have regard to the financial resources of the parties, and to the amount of costs likely to be in issue. It would be more likely to make an order where the respondent clearly had a superior ability to bear the costs of the proceedings than the applicant, and where it was satisfied that, unless the order were made, the applicant would probably discontinue the proceedings, and would be acting reasonably in so doing.

Those conditions were not satisfied in either of the cases before the court, and accordingly the applications would be refused.

– Kate O'Hanlon, Barrister

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هكذا من الأصل

Power of the union in Downing St

MARRIAGE FOR THE MILLENNIUM

Cherie Booth was an exceptional student with bags of ambition. The young Tony Blair may not have been as smart but he could match her for drive anyday. They both wanted a career in the law. They both wanted to be MPs. They also wanted to have a family. Something had to give. *Ann Treneman* on Britain's First Couple.

It's a story that many couples today can relate to. How do you keep a marriage together with both partners working and all the pressure of child-care and lack of time? Who is going to go to the supermarket, cook dinner, earn the most money?

The answer, the experts say, lies in the art of communication and old-fashioned respect. It's the kind of thing that Tony Blair and Cherie Booth know about. In a country where four in 10 marriages fail, the success of the First Marriage has not gone unnoticed. "Young men and women can really relate to them as a couple," said Helen Wilkinson, author of a report on marriage last year for the think-tank Demos. "They are seen as kind of having it all. On a symbolic level I think they are hugely significant."

Their story begins in 1977, and romantics should note that it was not love at first sight. Last year the Blairs, in a rare interview as a couple, told the American television programme *60 Minutes* how they met. "We were sort of sitting next to each other at something and discovered that, in fact, we were both pupils with the same barrister," said Tony. "Which didn't please me at all, because I had been assured I was going to be the only one," said Cherie. So, the interviewer said, were you rivals? "Hmmm, a little bit," said Cherie. "I suppose we could have been," said Tony.

Any couple hearing those answers would have to smile, not because of what was said but what was not said. Rivals? I should think so – both in career and in politics – but the wonder is that they have managed to transform their competition into co-operation. It hasn't been achieved without compromise.

Marriage may have been easier in the old days when wife and husband knew exactly what was expected of them. "When you don't have those roles there is much more room for conflict," says Penny Mansfield, of the charity One Plus One, which is conducting research on this subject for the Government. "Now couples have to make it up as they go along."

Tony and Cherie remained rival law students for almost a year. Then Cherie invited him to a Christmas party and they ended up playing a game that involved passing a balloon to each other through their legs. Suddenly, Tony saw his prickly and clever colleague in a different light. "The next day we went out to lunch and hours later we were still there," said Tony in an pre-election interview last year. "I found her immensely physically attractive and I wanted her as a friend as well."

Cherie was not so sure, but Tony Blair doesn't give up easily. "Once you succumb to Tony's charm," she has said, "you never really get over it." It was the biggest decision of her life.

They became engaged in 1979, during a holiday to Italy and married on 29 March 1980 at St John's College in Oxford. Like most couples now, they married relatively late (he was 26, she was 25). This trend has continued, with the average age of marriage going up over the past four years (now it is 27 for women, 29 for men) while the average first age of sexual intercourse has dropped four years to 17. And, also like most couples now, the Blairs have always been a dual career family. Somehow, they have made it work.

Many do not. These days, Penny Mansfield says, a satisfying marriage is not so much a romantic relationship as a partnership based on shared goals and respect. "The modern marriage requires three things," she says. "You've got to communicate effectively. You can't simply not say anything to each other and get on with your roles. Secondly, you've got to negotiate fairly. Each person must feel as if their needs have been regarded. Three, you need to manage conflict safely and you mustn't allow them to become personal and nasty."

For the Blairs, compromise began almost from the beginning. Early on, Cherie decided to quit competing directly with him for a tenancy in Lord Irvine's chambers and joined the chambers of libel lawyer George Carman instead. Tony Blair stayed put. Their next challenge would come in the political arena. Both were passionate about politics (she had joined the Labour party aged 16 in 1970, he waited until 1975) and decided that each would try to get elected to Parliament. Then they are said to have made a deal: whoever made it first would continue in politics while the other supported the family. Both stood for election. Cherie almost lost her deposit in Thanet North. Tony won in Sedgefield in 1983.

Fifteen years later, the deal still stands. It has lasted through the births of three children and much more. Cherie Booth – as she is known by colleagues – has made her family well-off if not rich. There are signs, too, that there have been negotiations over his career, particularly in his decision not to contest the deputy leadership under John Smith. "When it came to whether or not he was going to run for the deputy leader's job, Euan said he was glad that Daddy has chosen to spend more time at home," Cherie told interviewer Barbara Amiel in 1992. "I think Tony is incredibly talented and I want him to succeed – he's got an incredible amount to offer – but we've got young children and they need to be protected".

John Smith's death in 1994 forced the decision that the Blairs had thought would wait until their children were grown. Tony Blair told an interviewer last year that he heard the news while driving along the Great Northern Road in Aberdeen. "I had to speak to Cherie before I made any decision. I got back to London as quickly as I could." In Islington, he and Cherie sat down and talked. "Cherie said, 'You didn't ask for this, you didn't plan it, but it's here and you've got to do it'," said Tony. "I said: 'Look outside the front door. There were journalist and photographers and camera crews. I said: This is what we're going to expose the children to'."

In the end he listened to his wife, but he has stuck to his part of the bargain too. At a reception to mark her husband becoming leader, a local councillor noted that she would be giving up work if her husband became PM. "And can you tell me one good reason why I should?" she demanded. In 1995 she became a QC. "I would love to be a judge," she said. She is the first working mother to reside in Downing Street. "I'm full of admiration for Cherie. How she manages to do these cases and keep everything separate, I don't know," said Linda McDougall, author of *Westminster Women* and wife of Austin Mitchell MP.

We may never know much more about what makes the First Marriage tick although many, including Linda McDougall, enjoyed seeing a glimpse of the Blairs at home last month when a spoof caller to Number 10 was told to just hang on a minute while Cherie went to fetch the Prime Minister. "I thought that was an interesting insight. It sounded fantastically normal," she said. "It's great that they really do have their breakfast together and worry about the athletic kit and the socks."

Mr & Mrs: The Blairs outside No 10 yesterday to mark National Marriage Week. This year they will celebrate their 18th wedding anniversary *Photograph: PA*

Can you write the story of the year for six to nine year olds?

Win £2,000 and have your story published

The Independent/ Scholastic Story of the Year Competition, now in its sixth successful year, aims to encourage top writing for the very difficult to please six to nine year old age group.

To help you meet the challenge, some of our most successful novelists and scriptwriters will be explaining how they set about writing a page-turning narrative.

THE INDEPENDENT
Story of the Year 6
SCHOLASTIC

This week, **Robert Harris,** author of the international best-sellers, *Fatherland* and *Enigma*, talks to **Nicole Veash** about his approach to telling a story and developing characters.

'I just love all the twists and turns'

"People always say 'write what you know', but I have never written about anything I have experienced directly. For every 10 facts I know about the world I am writing of, I might only reveal three, but I think the reader senses you know more and that helps give depth to a book.

"I usually start writing the book quite early on into my research, and then I throw all those pages away. I suppose I feel my way in and then there comes a moment when everything works and the novel comes out quite fast. I only write one draft, make the necessary corrections, then send it off. I can't understand how some writers can go back and totally rewrite their books.

"Character, character, character – it might be a cliché – but character is really the most important thing. If the main character does not engage, then the book is not going to work. My characters all come from my head. I don't base them on people I know, apart from the odd visual characteristic.

"Characters should do unexpected things, like in real life. There is no denying that characterisation is very hard. In fact probably the most mysterious thing in the whole business is how to write a rounded character.

Robert Harris

"I like my characters to do things and see things. They should go to different places, so you get a sense of breadth.

"Dialogue is fantastically important. It should carry the story forward, of course, but it should also delineate irony and reveal something about a character with subtle undertones. I always read my dialogue aloud to see if it works.

"Plot is very unfashionable just now. No matter how beautifully a book is written it doesn't work for me unless the story is going somewhere. I just love all the twists and turns of story-telling.

"Making the book a page turner is something I seem to do naturally, but there is a basic level of craft. Each sentence should end with a mini climax, as should each paragraph and each chapter. You should always provide something to keep a reader going.

COMPETITION RULES

Story of the Year 6 offers a £2,000 prize for the winner, with £500 each for two runners up. The top 10 stories will be published in an anthology by Scholastic Children's Books. You are invited to submit stories of 1,500-2,500 words which must arrive on or before 28 February 1998 at: PO BOX 21302 • LONDON • WC1A 1PE. You may enter only once and entries must be made by the writer, not on his/her behalf. Entries must be typewritten, double-spaced and on one side of the paper only. We will not accept stories with illustrations. Manuscripts will not be returned, so please keep a copy. All entries must be unpublished, but published writers may enter with new material. Each entry must be submitted with both a cover page and title page. The cover page must feature the story title, and the entrant's name, address and telephone number. The title page must feature only the title of the story. The story should start on a new page, and the author's name must not feature on any of these pages, so that all entries can be judged anonymously. The winning story will be published in *The Independent* subsequent to the final judging of the competition which concludes on 22 May 1998. The top three stories and up to 10 others will be published in the autumn, in the anthology *Story of the Year 6* by Scholastic Children's Books.

The competition is not open to employees of, or relatives of employees of Scholastic Ltd or Newspaper Publishing plc or anyone connected with the competition. Proof of posting cannot be accepted as proof of delivery. No responsibility can be accepted for entries which are delayed, damaged, mislaid or wrongly delivered. The judges' decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. Entry grants to Scholastic Ltd the exclusive right to publish an entrant's story in all formats throughout the world for the full legal term of copyright. A copy of the form of the contract may be obtained on application to Scholastic Ltd. By submitting an entry an entrant agrees to be bound by the terms of and to sign this agreement if called upon to do so. Any story chosen for publication in the anthology that does not win one of the top three cash prizes will receive a fee of £200. Any entry not submitted in the form specified will be deemed invalid. If your story is not published in the anthology or in the newspaper by the end of December 1998, these rights revert to you. Entry into this competition implies acceptance of these rules.

How the Windsor sale will aid Dodi's charities

Billed as the biggest sale ever, the auction of the Windsor collection will raise money for causes considered dear to Dodi Fayed and Diana, Princess of Wales. *Kim Sengupta* investigates.

When New Yorkers got their first sight yesterday of the belongings of the Duke and Duchess of Windsor, the auctioneer Sotheby's described them as "perhaps the greatest treasure house of royal possessions offered at auction".

But there are more ghosts than just those of Wallis Simpson and the former king Edward VIII lurking among the shoes, silk ties and abdication desk put on display in Manhattan. The spectres of Dodi Fayed and Diana, Princess of Wales, will also haunt the sale on 20 February. Dodi's father, the Harrods owner Mohamed Al Fayed, has committed the proceeds of the sale to be distributed to the Dodi Fayed International Charitable Foundation and causes dear to the Princess, as a tribute to the couple whose deaths in a Paris car crash in August last year so shook the world.

With 44,000 items on sale, the auction is set to be the biggest of all time. Its proceeds have been estimated at $5m-$7m (£3m-£5m). However these are thought to be conservative figures, for the hyping of the event is expected to lead to something like the frenzy which greeted the sale of the Duchess's jewellery in Geneva in 1987.

Using the money from such a sale to benefit causes connected to Dodi and Diana must have seemed entirely apt to the Fayeds, for the Windsor belongings being auctioned off come from the Duke and Duchess's Bois de Boulogne home, which the Princess and her companion visited hours before their death.

Undoubtedly the money will make a difference to the work of the causes which will benefit. But who will be the recipients?

It is difficult to tell from what is known about Dodi Fayed's life just which good causes would receive money from the foundation. Mohamed Fayed bought the Windsor collection for $4.5m from the Institut Pasteur, the sole beneficiary of the Duchess's will after her death in 1986. There is no suggestion that that organisation will receive any money from this sale, but medicine is likely to benefit. Children's charities, too, seem to be contenders, given Diana's commitment to them.

The first tranche of money for the foundation will come from Mr Fayed who says he will provide £5m towards the building of a children's hospital in Diana's name. It unclear where where it will be built.

Remembered with a foundation: *Dodi Fayed's family has not said who will administer the charity*

Despite Mohamed Fayed's readiness to speak on a whole variety of issues – be it Harrods, Tiny Rowland, Tory MPs and the death of Diana – he has remained noticeably silent about the Dodi foundation. It is, for instance, not known who might administer the charity. There is a board of trustees, but so far the Fayed family is not disclosing who they are. Michael Cole, Mr Fayed's press spokesman who is in New York for the sale, said: "The foundation is a comparatively new thing. Mohamed is a trustee, and there are lots of prominent doctors and others on it. All the money will go to good causes. This auction is huge, it is not just the biggest ever royal auction, but the biggest auction ever."

The Dodi fund has no links with the Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund. Mr Fayed's insistence that the Princess had spoken some "last words" after the crash and his seeming concurrence with claims that she gave a "last interview" to *Paris Match* upset her family. Mr Fayed's executives point out however that there is no question of any conflict between the two funds.

Not everyone is happy about the collection being sold. Mr Fayed had outbid several military museums when he bought it. Now there are fears that a part of British heritage may be lost. Hugo Vickers, author of *The Private World of the Duke and Duchess of Windsor*, said it was "odd and disappointing" that Mr Fayed should decide to sell. Mr Fayed's response was that he was doing so "reluctantly". His legacy, he says, apart from the fundraising venture, is to establish an archive of Windsor papers and photographs.

THE INDEPENDENT

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IND174

The choice is yours, Mr Blair: Britain, or your friend Rupert Murdoch?

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The choice before Tony Blair during the next few days is a simple one. Does he intend to govern this country like John Major and umpteen predecessors before him – putting partisan interest first, worrying about face, saying in the hundred and one macho ways available to the tenant of No 10 Downing Street "I'm in charge"? Or does he intend to capture the spirit of those exchanges last week with Bill Clinton in which he claimed to represent a new style of governance – the same kind of spirit he showed in reaching out to take Paddy Ashdown into cabinet deliberations on constitutional reform. How big is Tony Blair?

The issue to hand is his government's response to defeat in the House of Lords on control over predatory pricing in our segment of the newspaper market. Of course *The Independent* has an interest but – as political and media commentary across the board has shown – the questions of Murdoch's market position and political influence go far wider than our fate. The Lords revolt can only be called a quality insurgency. That war horses of the Castle and Hattersley vintage should burst out of the paddock is one thing. But the opposition to the Government also included such saints of New Labour as Raymond Plant and David Puttnam, let alone experts as Gordon Borrie – a director of Mirror Group Newspapers – Maurice Peston and Joel Barnett. This was an action even the Prime Minister's caustic spokesman could not easily dismiss.

But that is the Lords, and it ill becomes any of us committed to the abolition of that chamber to make too much of any of its decisions. What would embarrass the Government is a quality revolt in the Commons, meaning by that not just the usual suspects but distinguished companions in Tony Blair's own cause of modernising the Labour Party. It is heartening to know that despite the pressures of the whips and thought-police individual members of the Parliamentary Labour Party are prepared to act on their own account. Would their ranks include, say, Charles Clarke, former aide to Neil Kinnock, the victim of Murdoch's 1992 vendetta, or Margaret Hodge, leader of Islington Council when it sought to ban *The Sun* from its libraries?

On previous form even former opponents of Rupert Murdoch's power, signatories of previous anti-Murdoch motions and authors of speeches in which he and his right-wing newspapers were attacked, will submit. Doubtless in the event of a challenge Mr Blair's ciphers will carry all before them. More iron will enter the backbench soul; more support will drain from the party; Murdoch will see his pound of flesh.

Does the alternative – some attempt to meet the points made by the Lords amendments – have to be a loss of face? For a government of traditional stamp, probably yes. But for a government seeking to redefine terms, catalyse change in the British body politic – does it really have anything to lose? Of course we would like the Government to accept the Lords' amendment as it stands – if only for its symbolic force as a statement of dismissal of Rupert Murdoch's ideology and colonial power in this country.

There are other ways to skin the cat. The object of the exercise is empowering the competition regulators so that a future investigation of News International's pricing policy would bite if evidence were presented showing intent to grab unfair market share. The Government says legislation should concern itself with general policy – even though there already exists competition law together with a set of precedents from investigations by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission which deal explicitly with the market for newspapers. Might then the Bill's general provisions on predatory pricing be tightened so that, without deliberate mention of Murdoch or his newspapers, his anti-competitive tactics policy in the broadsheet newspaper market get outlawed?

That is a practical, even a technical question. The Government could, in good conscience, invite the Trade Secretary (whatever happened to her conscience?) to sit down with Lord Borrie and other experts to flesh out new clauses – perhaps even open its mind to the possibility that the powers required cannot be effected without explicit mention of newspapers.

But that would require magnanimity on the Government's part. It would require Mr Blair to be seen admitting his friend Rupert Murdoch is the problem, in a way he has not done, at least since his visit to Australia. It would require Mr Blair to relinquish his apparent conviction that he can sup with the devil without tarnishing his halo. Above all it would require the Prime Minister to plump, to see that the fortunes of his government let alone his party lie on one side of the political (and cultural) divide and Rupert Murdoch and his interests on the other.

LETTERS

Post letters to Letters to the Editor
and include a daytime telephone number.
Fax 0171 293 2056; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk
E-mail correspondents are asked to give a postal address.
Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

Moral policy on Iraq

As Anglican bishops, we are concerned about the present direction of British and American policy on Iraq.

We share the concern of the British and American administrations that every effort be made to stop – or at least limit – the damage being done by Saddam Hussein's regime to his own people and to the stability of the entire region.

However, any action that will involve large-scale civilian casualties in Iraq leaves the Western nations in a weak moral position. What is more, military intervention by Western nations is likely to reinforce the already deep Muslim mistrust of the West.

The points we wish our government to consider are these:

(i) The existing UN resolutions on Iraq are a crucial sign of the general will of the international community. Military action not endorsed by the Security Council might weaken the force of these resolutions and undermine further the credibility of the UN in the Arab world.

(ii) At present, the goals of military intervention remain unclear. If we do not know the exact location of research establishments actively engaged in producing chemical and biological weapons, we cannot know that their elimination has been secured. The risk of widespread collateral damage must be pondered. Previous action reduced Iraq to a state in which the firm government of a ruthless tyrant seemed more than ever the only alternative to total social collapse.

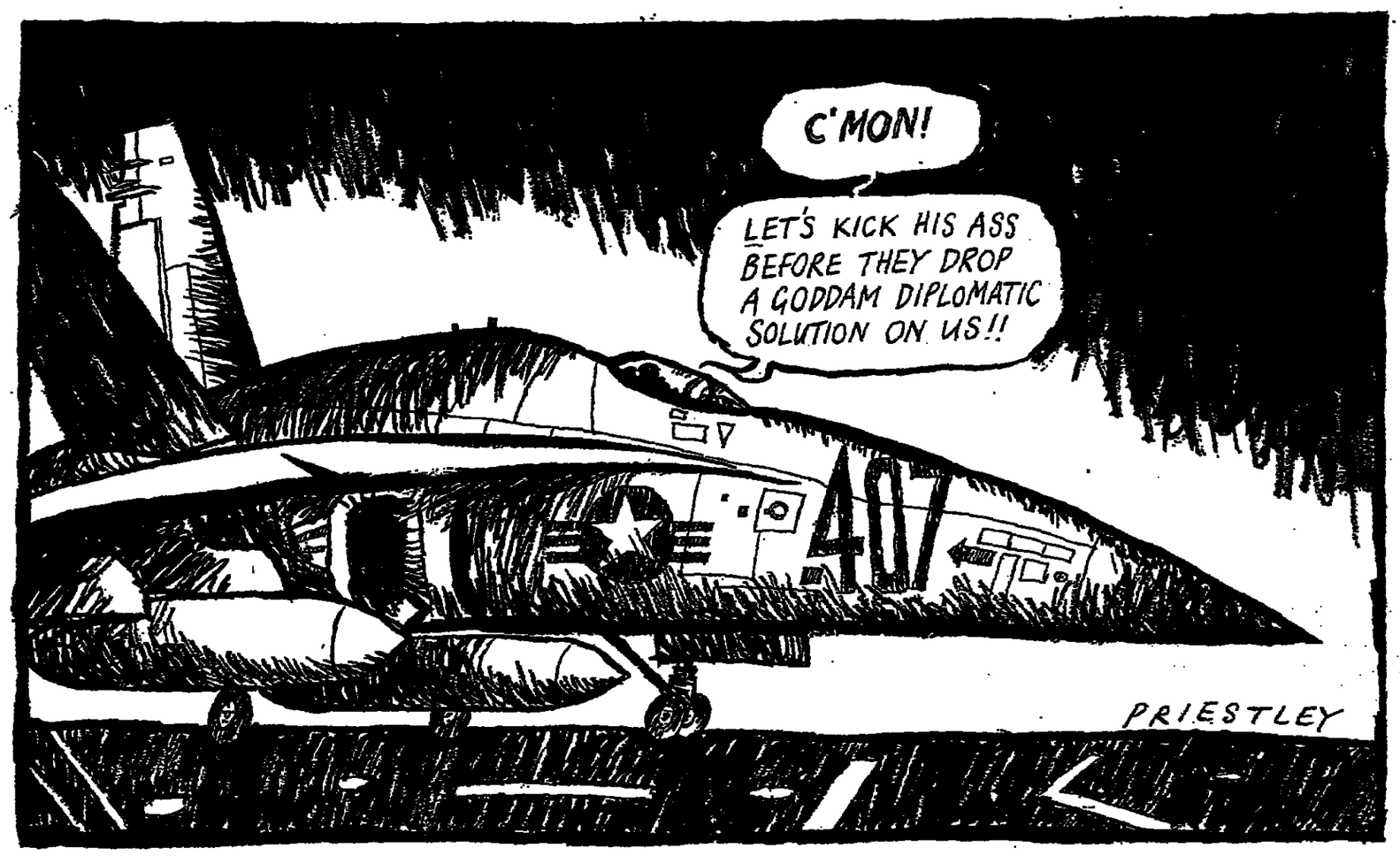
(iii) Just war theory requires a reasonable calculation of success in attaining clearly defined objectives, once all other avenues have been exhausted. We are not convinced that this applies here. What has made possible the limited progress achieved over the last six years? What are the possibilities of reconstituting an inspection team from nations less directly involved in the last conflict?

(iv) Sanctions in Iraq continue to cripple anything resembling civil society. If they are not to be lifted or modified, there must be urgent attention to developing the oil-for-food exchanges fostered by the UN and other possibilities for humanitarian aid.

(v) We do not write from a pacifist position, but from a common concern to urge government to search more actively for alternatives to violence, and to seek to work with and for international consensus, rather than allowing any kind of "superpower" mentality to make the running.

We raise these points on the basis of the Christian conviction that innocent citizens have the right not to become the target of threats and violence, and that the building of trust between peoples is the overriding priority for policy in such circumstances. Our prayers continue for all involved at every level.

ROWAN WILLIAMS, *Bishop of Monmouth;* PETER PRICE, *Bishop of Kingston;* BARRY MORGAN, *Bishop of Bangor;* WILFRED WOOD, *Bishop of Croydon;* JOHN AUSTIN, *Bishop of Aston;* CHRISTOPHER MAYFIELD, *Bishop of Manchester;* GRAHAM JAMES, *Bishop of St German;* WILLIAM IND, *Bishop of Truro;* JACK NICHOLLS, *Bishop of Sheffield;* PETER SELBY, *Bishop of Worcester*



Tax benefits

Your leading article ("Three steps forward and one step back for Mr Brown", 10 February) identifies a central theme of the forthcoming Budget as a shift from cash benefits to tax reliefs, most importantly via the replacement of family credit by a working families tax credit.

You praise the psychological advantage of shifting to a culture where people feel that they stand on their own feet rather than relying on state handouts. This has always been the traditional Treasury distinction between tax reliefs / allowances and benefits, of course – and a completely artificial one it is too.

In recent months, the new government seems by and large to have stopped referring to "welfare dependency", "handouts" and the "underclass". This is a very welcome change. But to distance in-work support from help given via social security, by routing it via the tax system instead, risks exacerbating the existing divisions between those in and out of work and the stigma of reliance on benefits.

To justify this by feeding the illusion that those of us in work are free-standing individuals getting no support via the fiscal system is to add insult to injury.

FRAN BENNETT
Oxford

Changing countryside

This country-dweller is sick of having his views "represented" by others. First it was the hunting lobby. Now I see that the Country Landowners Association and the National Farmers Union are claiming to speak for me ("When the wrath of the country people will be set ablaze", 7 February).

I love the landscape and the villages in my part of England. I like to walk in the woods and experience the passing of the seasons. I do not complain about the noise of tractors nor the smell of slurry. At the same time, I enjoy rock concerts and the cinema and the theatre. I travel to watch Premier League football. I vote Labour. I can't remember the last time I tugged my forelock. And I am realistic enough to recognise that, if it is to thrive, the countryside has to change.

A majority of country people oppose hunting with hounds. Quite apart from the obvious, the hunt is a nuisance and an inconvenience to those of us who live here. My guess is that a majority also want to see the "right-to-roam" enshrined in law – a manifesto commitment on which the Government seems to be planning to renege.

DAVID WILKINS
Berwick St Leonard, Wiltshire

Local democracy

Sir Jeremy Beecham calls for non-domestic rates to be returned to local control and claims that greater financial autonomy for local authorities is necessary to increase democracy ("Missing voters to be lured with polling booths in supermarkets", 10 February).

The fact is that, in 1989, when responsibility for setting the business rate was still with local government, businesses in inner London contributed three times more to local authority coffers than did domestic ratepayers – voters. This model of local democracy is not one we should be seeking to restore.

SIMON SPERRYN
London Chamber of Commerce and Industry
London EC4

Flying finance

Hamish McRae is right to point out (Business, 3 February) that the civil aircraft industry is one of the more extreme examples of corporate concentration, not least due to its highly capitalistic nature and its huge barriers to entry. However, his suggestion that of the two remaining aircraft manufacturers, Airbus and Boeing, only the latter can make a living without "subsidies" is wide of the mark.

Airbus Industrie does not receive subsidies – if Mr McRae means free, financial hand-outs. Rather, its industrial partners have received refundable launch-aid for some of the costs of research and development of specific aircraft programmes, with principal and interest repayable as a levy on aircraft sales. The European governments, having shared the risks of setting up aircraft-manufacturing activity in Europe, also share in its rewards.

The US authorities, on the other hand, through an indirect financial aid mechanism where repayment terms are nebulous, are generous to their manufacturers, thereby giving them a measurable advantage over us. Were Airbus Industrie the beneficiary of such largesse, its challenge to Boeing would be even more formidable.

ROBERT ALIZART
Vice President, Corporate Communications
Airbus Industrie
Blagnac, France

Save the arts

Loud bravos for the *Independent* for campaigning to rescue the arts from the brink of disaster. Tax relief for individual giving would be a boon. However, it would be damaging if the Government chose to decrease arts funding as a consequence of it.

We must not adopt the American model holus-bolus. America's most renowned living playwright has been urging us for years to keep our system of government subsidy. Arthur Miller has good reason. His fascinating later plays could not find a stage at home, but our subsidised theatre premiered them.

The continuance, indeed the increase, of public subsidy for the work at the beginning of the artistic ecological chain remains essential. The American experience is that, on average, it's the safe and prestigious end of the chain which most readily attracts private money.

The Government must continue subsidising the educational and the adventurous and the community arts, and it must invest in its current policy of making all the arts financially and socially accessible. Indeed, without such enlightened investment in the grass-roots, we would not have the more obvious successes of British culture which earn so much for the Treasury at home and abroad.

PHILIP HEDLEY
Artistic Director
Theatre Royal Stratford East
London E15

Pre-millennium Bug

Your article "Millennium Bug: Blair goes to war" (9 February) repeats the misunderstanding that the crisis will only occur as the clocks strike midnight on 31 December 1999. Companies will find that the crisis is upon them as soon as they attempt to place a sales order, purchase order or other transaction into 2000 which, for a company with long lead times, will be well before the end of December 1999.

PETER HARRIS
Rugby, Warwickshire

Abolish the church

I was incensed by the letter (6 February) from the Rev Peter Hatton, calling for the abolition of the lottery. Coming from someone employed in an industry that has for centuries exploited the credulous, gullible and needy, it's a bit rich.

ROBERT SMITH
Mersham, Surrey

I can't stand Sylvia Plath's poetry, but you should hear her comic material

MILES KINGTON

Brian Walden attracted a flurry of publicity the other day by saying the unsayable – that is, for saying that he thought Nelson Mandela was not a wholly admirable person. The late Enoch Powell will be remembered, poor chap, entirely for saying the unsayable on one single occasion, even though it is paradoxical that such a scholarly, academic chap should have caught the public fancy entirely in the character of a fiery racialist. Prince Charles caught the attention of the public by saying the unsayable about modern architecture.

A lot of us in private life probably risked a lot of flak by asking unsayable questions about Princess Diana. (Questions like: "Who cares?" and "Why has everyone gone mad?")

But I think it is very healthy to say the unsayable, to question comfortable assumptions. For instance, there is a goody-goody assumption on the programme *Desert Island Discs* that everyone will want the Bible and Shakespeare along with their chosen book. I don't know how many Muslims or atheists have been on the programme, but I wonder what they thought of having the Bible forced on them. And I do remember at least one occasion on which Shakespeare has been rejected. When Carla Lane was a guest on *Desert Island Discs* she was presented with the obligatory Bible and Shakespeare by the mandatory Sue Lawley. Unusually she told Sue Lawley she would rather not have the Shakespeare, as she didn't get anything out of him.

I can't remember the reasons she gave, nor what Sue Lawley said in response, if indeed she could think of anything to say, but I do remember a) disagreeing with Carla Lane, b) admiring her courage in saying what she said, c) envying the amount of free time she must have accrued through not bothering with Shakespeare.

And yet we must all have deaf areas which are totally unresponsive to things we really ought to respond to. I, for instance, spent many years as a jazz reviewer in which I never once confessed to my inability to enjoy Billie Holliday's singing. She was the ultimate jazz singer, we are always told, which is a shame, as I actively dislike the sound of her voice and find her style unpleasantly mannered. On the few occasions that I voiced my inability to appreciate her, I got the sort of reaction from other jazz lovers that the Archbishop of Canterbury might get if he let drop at the Synod that he wasn't too sure he saw the point of God, so I started to keep quiet about what I felt about Billie Holliday.

Same about Sylvia Plath. I have tried on several occasions to tackle her writing, and have always found it so gloomy and nerve-racking that I have ended up flinging it joyfully across the room and swearing never to try again. The only time I have ever liked the idea of Sylvia Plath was, oddly, when I came across a tape of her voice in the BBC Radio Archives. She wasn't reading poetry: She wasn't even talking about poetry. She was talking about the British weather and landscape, and how it struck an American newcomer to these shores, and what she said was bright and funny. Bright and funny! Sylvia Plath being bright and funny! It seems incredible, doesn't it? You can keep her poetry, I'm afraid, but I do like her comic material ...

(I sometimes feel the same about Dylan Thomas. I like *Under Milk Wood* a lot better than anything else he ever wrote. I once dared to say so in a Welsh gathering, and I could feel the glittering hostility immediately. I shall not make the same mistake again. Dylan Thomas is the only world-renowned writer produced by Wales since the War, and criticising him constitutes more than just voicing an opinion – it's tantamount to trying to sabotage the Welsh economy.)

As a jazz lover, I am very well aware that a lot of people feel this way about jazz. Jazz people always think they are hard done by when it comes to air-time, and never cease to badger BBC Radio for more jazz coverage. Recently things have got better and there is more jazz, especially on Radio 3. So I should have foreseen the letters which were read out on *Feedback* the other day, indignantly saying that there was FAR too much jazz on Radio 3 these days ...

But when it comes to saying the unsayable, and voicing prejudices, and airing blind-spots, it was a jazz musician who came up with one of the best examples ever. It is said that when Buddy Rich, the hard-driving, hard-bitten jazz drummer, was in hospital for his last major heart operation, the surgeon came past his bed one evening and said to him: "Everything all right, Mr Rich? Anything bothering you?"

"Yeah," he said. "Country music."

هكذا من الأصل

Valentine's Day proves that romance is alive and well

HAMISH McRAE

THE FUTURE OF MARRIAGE

First, a helpful reminder. Just *in case* you might have forgotten, Saturday is St Valentine's day. So if you are inclined to put a note in this newspaper to the effect that "Little nut brown hare loves big nutcracker hare infinitely" (an authentic *one* from a couple of years' back), you have until *noon* today to do so.

If you do, you will be carrying on a tradition that is more than 2,000 years old. The day carries the name of St Valentine (a Roman priest clubbed to death circa 270) or possibly the other St Valentine (Bishop of *Terni*, martyred a few years later). But the idea of a *countryside festival in* the middle of February to celebrate *the mating* of birds (and, by extension, human *mating*) *predates* Christianity. The festival of Lupercalia was a Roman pagan one, held on 15 February. The date came forward a day when the Christians adopted the *festival* and *linked* it to St V. But the idea seems to have carried on, more or less unchanged, right through the Middle Ages, to be mentioned by Chaucer (*Assembly of Fowls*) and by Shakespeare (*Midsummer Night's Dream*). So those of us who contribute to the 11.34 million valentine cards the Royal Mail expects to be posted this week are not just dupes of the modern greetings card industry: *we are prisoners* of a much older tradition.

We remain prisoners, however, at a moment when the role of women – at least in western society – has changed more in the last 40 years than at any time in the previous 2,000. Take *two measures* of that change: marriage and female participation in the workforce. The new *Social Trends*, published at the end of last month, reported that by 1996 births outside marriage here *in Britain had* reached 36 per cent (and it is over 50 per cent in Sweden).

As for female participation in the workforce, while we have not yet reached the point of Sweden, where there are more women in jobs than men, there are 11.75 million women *in employment in* Britain against 14.5 men, whereas in 1979 there were only 9.5 million women and 14.8 million men. In other words, there are more than two million more women in work than there were two decades ago: but *300,000* fewer men. Gradually, *inexorably, the workforce* is becoming feminised.

These changes are remarkable. Indeed when humankind looks back on the last quarter of century I suspect that the dominating change – *more important* that the end of the Cold War or the economic revival of China – will be the change in the lives of women, in particular the increase in their earning capacity and the social consequences associated with that. *Those social consequences* of course include the freedom to get out of unsatisfactory marriages, or to have children without the *social* and economic pressure to get married first.

We may be dissatisfied with *marriage*, but our desire for romance evidently continues as strongly as ever, for how else could one *explain* the increasing enthusiasm for this pagan festival of the mating birds? Does this simply mean that we *want* romance without commitment? Or could it be that the last couple of decades will come to be seen as an historical oddity? Maybe in another couple of decades, the institution of marriage will have *made* a come-back, births out of wedlock will be *in rapid* decline and women will have chosen to give up paid work and return to being "homemakers", cooking nourishing meals to welcome home their frazzled husbands?

By coincidence, some support for the "women of leisure" came yesterday from one of those surveys of women's opinion (published by a magazine called *Top Santé*). It suggested that given the choice most women *would* like to give up work and be homemakers.

It is certainly possible that the developed world could revert to the pattern where women did go back to homemaking: that *happened in the 1950s* when the marriage *age dropped, the birth rate rose* and female participation rates in the workforce fell. But I think, looking ahead one or two generations at least, that the recent change in work patterns will be permanent. The harsh reality of the rise in the proportion of elderly people relative to those of working age will mean that just about everybody who can work *will have* to do so.

On *the other hand I also suspect* that marriage will make a come-back. That is not a comment on the moralising attitudes of our new political masters; rather it is an observation of US social trends, where there is considerable *pressure* to try to find ways of beefing up the marriage contract. As yet there is little evidence here of the opprobrium that used to be attached to "living in *sin*" or "trading in for a younger model" – indeed the politically *correct behaviour* seems to be to dump the wife and marry the mistress. But it is important to remember that social attitudes do swing from one extreme to another, and just as the 1950s now seem an oddity of *repressive social* (and sexual) conformity, so the present norm of one-third of children being born outside marriage may seem equally odd in another 40 years' time.

Indeed it is just possible that the revival of Valentine's day – statistically more cards being posted than ever before in our history – is a sort of lead indicator suggesting a rise in a desire for stable relationships. Unless *we are absolutely hopeless* romantics or profound hypocrites, when we profess undying love and devotion to each other (in pretty dopey language) we do actually mean it. So our desire for love and romance seems to be as *great* as ever. What we haven't quite figured out is *how to combine* that aspiration with a genuine equality of opportunity in the workplace and a genuine equality of chore-sharing in the home.

If we have failed on that score, our failure is *unsurprising*. The rise of women's economic opportunities is a change of seismic proportions. There is no road-map of how we should adjust, so this generation has to make it up as it goes along, with only *common sense as a guide. It would be astounding* if it did not take a while to establish new social norms to apply to the changed economic scene. But gradually that will happen. And I expect it will happen by refashioning, *adapting and developing* institutions that go back for thousands of years – like Valentine's day, and also like marriage.

A Deputy Prime Minister should watch the company he keeps

GLENDA COOPER

NEVER SUP WITH STARS

"You should *never* put on your best trousers when you go out to fight for freedom and truth," said Ibsen. You should also take your raincoat with you, John Prescott could have added after attending the Brit Awards on Monday night.

The poor old deputy Prime Minister *fell victim* at what is fast becoming an annual event at the Brit Awards – the Jarvis Cocker Moment. Named after *the lead singer of Pulp, it is the moment when pop stars* suddenly remember that their job isn't all about huge record contracts, PR opportunities and sensible lifestyles. For a brief second they remember that the whole point about rock'n'roll is to be mad, bad and dangerous to know.

It's a lesson *politicians seem* reluctant to take on board, however, as can be seen by Mr Prescott's surprise at his dousing by the alternative band Chumbawamba. They've somehow been seduced into thinking that pop stars are nothing more than cuddly photo opportunities vital to any political party. One Downing Street *insider* remarked acidly yesterday that there were more No 10 people at the Brit Awards than in Washington for Blair's love-in with Clinton. Well, I *suppose* the Spice Girls were being presented with a special prize for overseas success, which is more upbeat than the overseas failure to deal with Iraq.

But you can't rely on pop stars to behave themselves, particularly at the Brit Awards. Jarvis Cocker started it at the 1996 awards when Michael Jackson adopted a Messianic pose surrounded by adoring waifs in rags while he sang "Earth Song". Cocker, hero of *the Common People objected* to this yucky gushiness and bounded on stage.

Still he isn't the only one to behave badly. You can always rely on Oasis. At the same awards ceremony Liam Gallagher tried to push a statuette up his bottom and Noel Gallagher snarled at *Michael Hutchence* "Has-beens shouldn't be giving awards to gonnabes."

Last year it was somewhat quieter with *only Irvine* Welsh's salute to the Liverpool dockers and, most daringly, ITV's decision to broadcast the evening's best joke, which dealt with the prickly topic of pop stars *and cocaine*. "Charlie, wherever you are, can you make yourself known," requested the comedienne Mrs Merton. "They're all asking for you backstage ..."

Still, if you want to organise bad behaviour properly, you do need the fully paid up anarchist to do so. Danbert Nobacon, member of Chumbawamba (who had already taunted the Government about the Liverpool dockers), waited until Fleetwood Mac were playing, then crept up on John Prescott from behind, and emptied an ice bucket *over him*.

Nobacon's fellow band member "Boff" later said, tantalisingly, that Nobacon and Mr Prescott had a long running "thing" but declined to elaborate further – much to everyone's disappointment. Mr *Prescott* released a statement *yesterday* condemning Chumbawamba's act as "deplorable", "totally unacceptable public behaviour", and said he was considering making a complaint. "It now appears that it was a publicity stunt designed to draw attention to the group's act," added the official *statement*. "[*Mr Prescott*] *thinks it* is utterly contemptible that his wife and other women-folk should have been subjected to such terrifying behaviour simply because they were accompanying a public figure at an event designed to support the British music industry."

Oh for goodness' sake, John, take a chill pill. The whole point of being an anarchist band is nothing if not to indulge in deplorable and unacceptable behaviour. And you're not going to endear yourself any further to British youth by talking about "womenfolk" being terrified and then allowing yourself to be "comforted" by Ginger Spice, Geri Halliwell. I'm sure any woman would be more terrified by Geri looming over her man than a solitary anarchist.

But the Blair government in its desire to be young, hip and everything that is Cool Britannia has somehow overlooked the fact that a *big* part of youth culture is being rebellious, creative and just plain awkward – rather like the adolescents it appeals to.

Politicians and pop stars schmoozing up to one another is nothing unusual. Harold Wilson awarded the Beatles MBEs in 1965. President Clinton asked *Fleetwood Mac to play* at his first inaugural celebrations. Over a succession of dinners in 1972, Tom Driberg tried to persuade Mick Jagger to stand as a Labour MP.

But all this cosying up to the pop industry is inevitably going to end up making everyone look *stupid. Noel Gallagher* was vaguely amusing when he was rebellious. But when Noel slurs the following: "There are seven people in here who are givin' hope to the young people of this country. Me, our kid, Guigsy, Bonehead, Alan White [Oasis], Alan McGee [the boss of Creation Records] ... and Tony Blair," you just want to vomit.

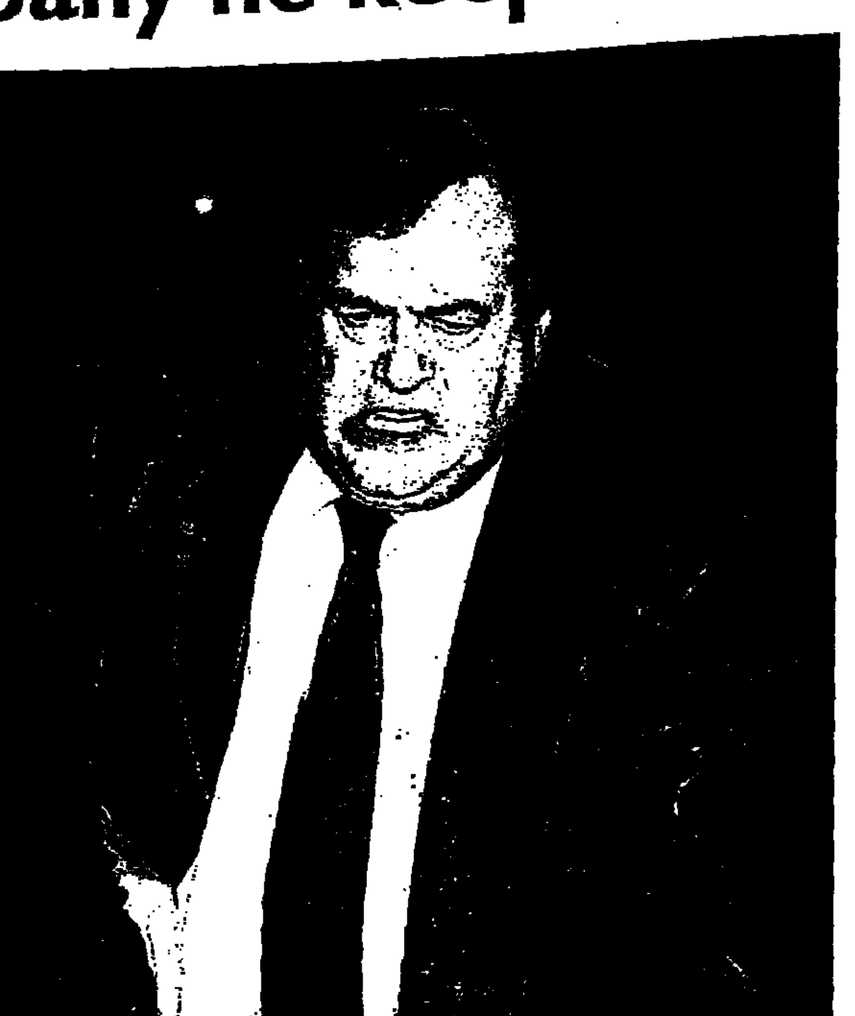
Last week Wayne Hemingway, chairman of Red or Dead, warned Blair that attempts to "rebrand" Britain as the epicentre of coolness were just "sad". "By simply inviting a few (mostly naff) pop stars and comedians to drinkies at Number *Ten*, the very people Blair is trying to impress will be turned off," he said.

Bill Drummond, part of the art pranksters the K Foundation, agrees. Last year he attacked Alan McGee, head of Oasis's record company, Creation, for joining the Government's task force *on the* arts. "I'm getting very frightened," he said at the time. "It is the job of the arts to stand outside the establishment. As soon as you start becoming part of the PR of a government you are getting into a dangerous area."

And what happens when the Government starts implementing things that aren't quite so popular? While, *during the review* of the year, the audience at the Brit Awards were cheering for Blair's election victory, they had forgotten the 200 demonstrators *outside, protesting* against low wages for CD packers. One of *the demonstrators* who vaulted over a barricade to get to Cherie Blair said she had promised to look into the case. Will she? No one will be cheering *All Saints quite so loudly if* they become associated with the party that cuts benefits.

No, the Government needed a blast of icy water to remind *its members to stop* behaving like starry-eyed teens when a pop star swings into view. Tony and Co now have to act out the roles of responsible parental figures of *Her Majesty's* Government. By trying too hard to be in touch with popular culture, they're not only making themselves look silly but destroying the street-cred of countless stars along the way.

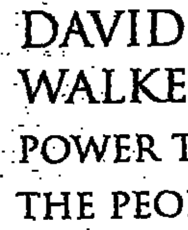
When Virginia Bottomley invited Alan McGee to her office for tea, he politely but firmly refused. "With her record of closing *hospitals down*," said the man who discovered Oasis, "I am concerned that fraternising with her may result in the closure of my record company." Everyone cheered and thought Oasis were *cool*. A year later Alan McGee joins a government task force, everyone hates Oasis and even Noel himself admits the third album wasn't much good. I rest my case.



A very wet politician: John Prescott at the Brit Awards Photograph: Chris Harris

The Government, in its desire to be young and hip, has overlooked the fact that youth culture is rebellious, and just plain awkward

Elected mayors could give Personality to local government



DAVID WALKER

POWER TO THE PEOPLE

Go to Birmingham, Manchester or Newcastle-upon-Tyne and it's as quiet as Calabria. Local Labour activists are observing the code of *omertà*.

Labour councillors ought to be fuming. Since last May, ministers *from their own* party have cut their grants, moved to take away what is left of their control of schools and social services, excluded them from the new regional set-up, screwed their spending caps down, all the while badgering them *in* Thatcherite tones *about efficiency and effectiveness*. And the response: not a cheep.

Yet the silence is not too much of a puzzle. Those councillors know their capacity to say boo to Tony Blair and his Cabinet constrained by their own parlous position in the public's hearts and minds. Teresa Stewart, veteran Old Left leader of *Birmingham*, knows full well *that* a *word* out of place would have Alastair Campbell rifling through his dictionary of party put-downs: but would that matter if she could *mobilise Handsworth and Aston*? Lord (*Steve*) Bassam, leader of Brighton, is not just constrained by his mint-new peerage but by the distinctly ambiguous *attitude towards* his council of the residents of Kemp Town.

For every opinion poll showing people value local self-government in *principle, councillors* daily drown in a sea of apathy, tinged with harsh criticism of the services they provide, from pavements to public housing. The fact that under Thatcher councils lost power is a ready *excuse* but not a convincing explanation. The bigger reason is that the way local political business is conducted sits ill in the culture. All those drafty halls and smoke-filled rooms smell *of yesterday*. When was the last time you heard a *reference* to council affairs in Albert Square or The Street?

Councillors get by on sufferance. Out there, there is no enthusiasm for what they do. Tony Blair knows that. *It's because they know he* knows it that the *municipal* silence of recent *months* has been so resounding. And that's also the reason why Labour councillors – currently so dominant in the local scene – have no choice but to respond *enthusiastically* to the revivalist programme for local democracy presented the other day by John Prescott.

Even before – see Glenda *Cooper above* – he went to humiliation at the Brit Awards, the Deputy Prime Minister had been practising his Sixties hits by giving his green paper the title "*power to the people*". If you are a *councillor* comfortable in your committee, his recipe for plebiscites, Klieg lights and mayors could look mighty threatening. But at this moment in time you *have no choice to* pick up the Government's suggestions and run with them.

Labour councillors know – if they have any political intelligence at all – that in these circumstances Prescott is the best friend they have got: there is a swarm of bright young things in No 10 already thinking the unthinkable about getting rid of councils as we know them. The education minister Stephen Byers, tipped for the top, is a fierce critic. The social services minister Paul Boateng says councils are members of the fingertip club. The choice is stark. *Either councils change radically* or they *face* extinction.

But now the Government has dangled a life-line in front of them in the shape of its proposal *for elected mayors. This* is essentially about trying to inject Personality into local public administration, to give local people a means of identifying subjectively with grey procedure.

When was the last time you heard a reference to council affairs in Albert Square or The Street?

At present local government is a charisma-free zone. After you have recalled Joe Chamberlain "gassing and watering" Birmingham in the last *century, T. Dan Smith* in Newcastle in the Sixties and Ken Livingstone at the GLC in the early Eighties, big figures are hard to find. (Smith may have taken a bung or two, but for a few years at least he gave Geordies real pride in their city's civic identity).

The mayoral office, invested with executive power and subject to direct elections, might attract people with pulling power. We may not be very impressed with the names mentioned so far in connection with the Greater London mayoralty (with the exception, perhaps, of Glenda Jackson who is reported to be on the point of announcing her candidacy), but there is no denying the frisson of interest it has excited. *And that is not just, the polls* confirm, among professional chatterers. Ordinary Londoners have actually been heard talking about their self-government! (I know. I heard them myself on a bus in Clapham the other day.)

Of course the cult of personality does not offer much to the municipal mavens who have toiled away for years in their surgeries and committees. But without Personality, what *prospects do local authorities* have in a television age, when the public space has shrunk and people are decreasingly willing to spend time and energy on collective endeavour?

There are other, imaginative proposals in John Prescott's paper and in Lord Hunt's experimental arrangements Bill, now before the Lords. They ought to be eagerly seized. It won't do for councillors to ring their *hands and worry whether, even if they* did miraculously reinsert councils into the public's political imagination, the central government would ever respond by entrusting them with more powers.

The point is that they have no choice. Further reduction in their powers is already on the New Labour agenda. Education action zones, special committees to run social services, further moves to turn councils into mere agents of the centre in (the phrase is used in No 10) *managing* the underclass: that is their fate. Take an example from Monday. There was the housing minister Hilary Armstrong sending a shot across *council bows on rents*. They were collecting less, she complained – and in the background is the threat that Labour (following the Tories) will expropriate councils and end their role as large-scale property owners.

Councils have only one *place to go. Call it*, as Prescott did, "modernisation", call it the revitalisation of local democracy. The predominantly grey-suited, middle-aged men who control Labour locally have *to get up and go*. If they had sense they would straightaway badger ministers with their own proposals – for proportional representation and the end of single-party hegemony, for active recruitment of younger people, user-friendly procedures, sleek, telegenic mayors. If that sounds like a collective suicide note, so be it. Only by throwing themselves on the Blairites' bayonets can the old guard ensure local democratic self-government survives.

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FINANCIAL JOURNAL OF THE YEAR

BP investors set for $1bn share buyback bonanza this year

By Chris Godsmark
Business Correspondent

British Petroleum is planning a rolling programme of share buybacks, likely to generate windfalls to investors worth hundreds of millions of pounds a year, despite disappointing shareholders yesterday with weaker than expected profits.

BP first revealed its long-awaited share-buyback plans last summer but investors were asked to wait until the annual shareholders' meeting in April for details of the policy. The oil giant is now expected to seek investors' permission to make a series of buybacks, with the aim of distributing excess profits in a year-on-year bonanza. The company will seek to renew the buyback powers at each subsequent agm.

John Browne, chief executive, will tell shareholders that the company can no longer find sufficiently attractive investment opportunities for all of its cash. The company is expected to invest some $5.7bn (£3.6bn), similar to the figure achieved in 1997, but still has substantial sums of extra cash which the management believe should be handed back to investors.

Though BP needs to ask shareholders for the power to make buybacks, it has since last year spent $270m on purchasing stock for its employees share schemes. Mr Browne said the timing of the buybacks would depend on further clarification of the UK tax regime, following the Government's decision to phase out advanced corporation tax on dividends.

Announcing a 13 per cent rise in annual profits to a record £2.8bn, BP said its debt stood at $6.9bn (£4.3bn), lower than the group's target range of $7bn-$8bn. This would suggest the first buybacks this year could reach $1bn (£600m).

At the same time BP will pledge a steady increase in dividends to investors, based on underlying profits generated from an average oil price of around $16 a barrel. BP yesterday raised its quarterly dividend by 0.25p to 5.75p, bringing the annual payout to 22p, a 13 per cent rise on 1996.

Mr Browne will also reveal much tougher efficiency targets at the agm as part of BP's self-help programme. The company had almost achieved its targets for the millennium by the end of last year. BP has made efficiency gains worth around $1.2bn, just $300m short of the 2000 target.

John Browne: No attractive investments for all BP cash

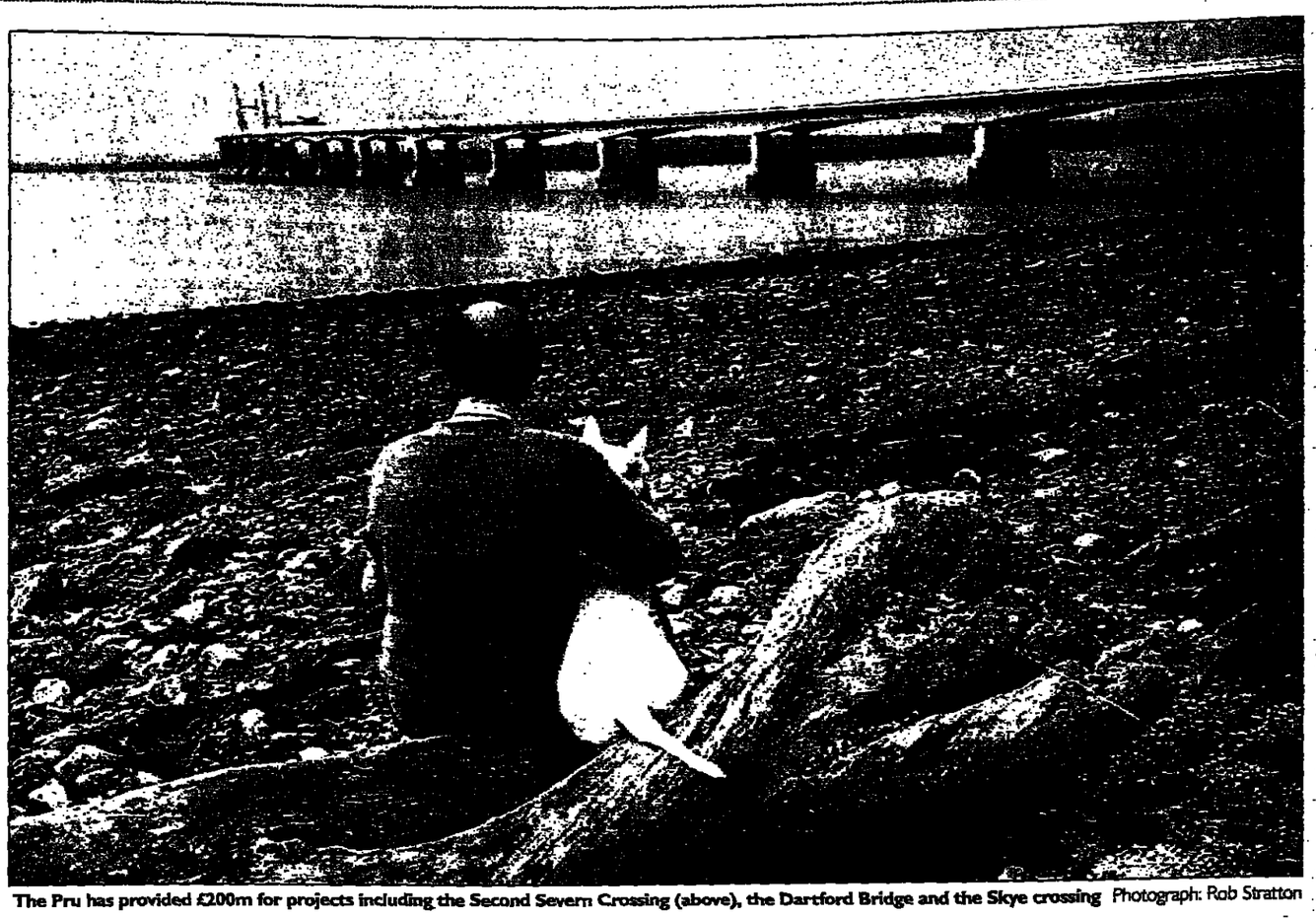
Though Mr Browne kept investors guessing about the new policy yesterday, he promised BP would deliver "new and different ways of doing business". He added: "We are still motoring and we are still speeding up.... The journey continues; we haven't just arrived."

BP shares fell 21p to 793p after the group revealed a 4 per cent drop in profits between October and December to £636m. The fall in fourth quarter profits was blamed on currency weaknesses in Europe and the Far East.

BP played down suggestions that the falling oil price was to blame, despite the fact that the $18.40 a barrel averaged by BP during the quarter was some 20 per cent lower than the year before. Brent crude was trading yesterday at just over $15 a barrel, compared with a peak during 1996 of around $25.

Mr Browne claimed BP's financial performance no longer depended on oil prices. "The supposedly iron link between our profit and the oil price has been broken." BP expected prices to trade at the bottom end of a $15-$18 a barrel range, though Mr Browne quickly added that this was "not a forecast".

Delays to the deep water Foinaven field to the west of Shetland cost BP about $70m last year. Production finally started in December after a series of technical problems and delays due to bad weather. Other big projects in Alaska, the Gulf of Mexico, Angola and the Caspian were all expected to contribute to a surge in production during 1998.


The Pru has provided £200m for projects including the Second Severn Crossing (above), the Dartford Bridge and the Skye crossing Photograph: Rob Stratton

Government unveils list of 50 public sector PFI projects

By Michael Harrison

The Government has identified 50 public sector projects with a capital value of £5bn as priorities for completion under the Private Finance Initiative.

The schemes include a £200m project to condense the top security GCHQ listening centre in Cheltenham on to one site, a £180m refurbishment of the Ministry of Defence's Whitehall headquarters, a £330m ticketing system for London Underground and a new £140m hospital for Edinburgh.

A number of large schools programmes also feature on the list of "significant" schemes including a project to refurbish 38 primary and secondary schools in Glasgow.

However, the list contains only one road project – a £125m scheme to upgrade the A13, known as the Thames Gateway.

Unveiling the list, Geoffrey Robinson, the Paymaster General, also disclosed that 30 schemes worth £1.5bn had been signed off by the Treasury's private finance taskforce since Labour came to power last May. This brings the running total including the Channel Tunnel Rail Link to £8.5bn. However, the Treasury has abandoned its formal target of completing £14bn worth of PFI schemes by the end of next financial year.

Mr Robinson said the schemes had been selected because they were either big, high profile, ground-breaking or acted as models for how the PFI could be applied in particular areas of the public sector.

He played down fears that projects not featured on the list, such as the M8 motorway in Scotland, had been downgraded or would not get PFI backing. Mr Robinson denied that the collapse of London & Continental Railways' plan for the rail link – by far the biggest project attempted under the PFI – had in any way undermined the initiative.

Adrian Montague, the Dresdner Kleinwort Benson banker brought in last year to head up the taskforce, also disclosed that finance for PFI projects was now being raised through the private placement market in addition to bank debt and public bonds.

The Prudential has so far provided about £200m for a range of projects including the Second Severn Crossing, the Dartford Bridge and the Skye crossing.

US telecoms giant reveals internet telephone challenge to BT

Move could halve the cost of international calls writes, **Chris Godsmark** Business Correspondent

The world's first world-wide phone service using the internet computer network to send signals was unveiled yesterday, a move which its backers predicted could more than halve the cost of international phone calls.

USA Global Link, the world's largest discount reseller of call time, is to spend $1.2bn (£750m) building the network, which will provide the biggest challenge yet to the established giants such as AT&T and British Telecom. The company has expanded rapidly since its formation in 1992 by buying bulk capacity on long-distance lines and selling it at budget prices to customers.

The first plank of the new network, linking New York with Dublin and slashing the cost of transatlantic calls in the process, will be in place by the end of March. USA Global Link plans to spend $500m on the first three-year phase of the project, which will involve installing 500 computerised switches around the world.

The privately owned group has signed a letter of intent with 3Com Corporation, a US equipment manufacturer, to build the state-of-the-art equipment. Last year the two groups began the first full-scale trials of an internet voice telephony service in Europe in an attempt to end doubts about service quality.

"We wanted to solve the technical challenges. This is not going to be some kind of hack solution with jerky sound quality. It's a real phone system with all the quality people would expect," said Mark Petrick, Global Link's communications director.

The service works by routeing calls through the existing local phone network to a switch, which changes the signal into digital information matching that transmitted on the internet. Many more "packets" of information can be transmitted across long-distance lines in this way than with the older analogue phone technology.

Experts are predicting that internet phone traffic will become a serious challenge to the expensive digital technology being deployed by companies like BT and Energis. A recent report by Ovum, the respected consultancy group, concluded that internet voice traffic could offer more capacity, lower prices and lower billing costs than conventional networks.

Technological strides are already changing the economics of phone systems, with prices for international calls falling to as little as 7p per minute between the UK and the US. USA Global Link predicted it could at least halve the already discounted "reselling" charges to customers.

It said initial switches would be installed in Brazil, Germany, the Netherlands, Japan, Switzerland and Hong Kong, though the company has no immediate plans to offer a UK service. Alongside ordinary voice telephony, the network will offer broadband services such as video links and high-speed data transmission.

To fund the expansion, Global Link is expected to float part of the company on US stock markets later this year. The group, saw revenues grow to $241m last year, was set up by two groups of family investors in Iowa in the Midwest to exploit the potential for cut-price telephony.

Nomura pulls out of bidding for Energy

By Michael Harrison

Nomura, the Japanese bank, last night pulled out of the bidding for Energy Group, the owner of Eastern Electricity, insisting that its decision was based solely on price and not the prospect of being blocked by the regulatory authorities.

The move reduces the contest for Energy group to a two-way fight between the US power companies, PacifiCorp and Texas Utilities. PacifiCorp last week came back with an agreed 765p a share offer for Energy group, valuing the business at £4.06bn after being cleared to bid again by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Nomura's interest in bidding cast a spotlight on Guy Hands, managing director of its Principal Finance Group who reputedly earns £40m a year, and the methods the Japanese company would have used to finance any offer.

Last night, however, Mr Hands said: "After discussions with industry experts and with regulators, Nomura strongly asserts that ownership of Eastern Electricity by Nomura International would have been viewed in the same light by the regulatory authorities as ownership by PacifiCorp or Texas Utilities. We regard any claims to the contrary as ill-informed and misleading." Nomura said Energy Group's return on capital was insufficient to justify a price above 765p.

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Power engineers may get on their bikes to beat the millennium bug

By Chris Godsmark

Hundreds of London Electricity engineers could be told to get on their bikes as part of contingency plans to beat the year 2000 computer bug and millennium celebrations in the capital.

The proposal, under serious consideration by senior executives, is one of a host of ideas generated by a working party of engineers in London's main power distribution business. The group has been asked to come up with ways to stop London's lights going out, should the world-wide computer meltdown predicted by some experts become reality.

London fears that massive traffic disruption to the capital on New Year's Eve could make it virtually impossible for engineers to get to faults on the system.

One way round the chaos would be for all its engineers to be issued with mountain bikes, enabling them to squeeze through the congestion. "We're looking at all the options. Our priority is to keep the lights on and if it came to giving our engineers bikes then so be it," said a spokesman.

Many interruptions to supplies could come if computer systems crash, though London, in common with other companies, has been spending millions of pounds attempting to fix the problem.

The millennium bug comes because most computers can only recognise the last two digits of the year. It means computers are unable to distinguish between 2000 and 1900, causing all kinds of unexpected difficulties.

British Petroleum yesterday became the latest company to reveal huge costs to fix the bug. The oil giant said it expected to spend around $140m (£88m), on top of up to $70m to get ready for the single European currency.

Other suggestions from the electricity group included installing an emergency phone service linking electricity sub-stations. Another is to abandon the computer age altogether and post engineers to all the main sub-stations, most of which are fully automated, ready to operate them manually.

Unilever ready to shun suppliers who ignore year 2000 computer threat

By Nigel Cope and Peter Thal Larsen

Two of Britain's largest companies issued stern warnings yesterday about the potentially devastating impact of the millennium bug on computer systems.

Unilever, the Persil detergents and Flora margarine consumer goods group, warned its smaller suppliers that they could be de-listed if their systems were not millennium complaint by spring next year. The company has already said that it will cost £250m-£300m to ensure that its own systems will function effectively through 2000.

Reuters, the media and information group, revealed it would cost £73m to prepare its dealing and information screens for the year 2000. It spent £11m on fixing the bug last year, and it expects the programme to cost a further £31m this year. Although it has set a target of fixing all its systems by the end of the year, the company thinks it will have to spend a similar amount solving last-minute problems in 1999.

To make managers address the issue, Reuters plans to adjust senior executives' bonuses depending on whether they meet targets for fixing systems.

Rob Rowley, finance director, said £73m was the additional amount Reuters had to spend to fix the bug. The company is also devoting a large amount of existing resources to continuing operations of the issue. This year alone, it expects in-house staff to spend 725 staff hours tackling the problem.

At Unilever, Niall FitzGerald, the chairman, said: "We are concerned that not all our suppliers are giving this issue adequate attention." He said the lack of awareness was most acute among small and medium sized enterprises.

In a stark warning to the group's supplier base he added that companies who by spring 1999 still did not know whether their systems would operate effectively in the 2000 would find themselves in "a suspect position" in their relationship with Unilever.

He was speaking as Unilever reported flat profits on continuing operations of £2.5bn. This excludes a £2.9bn exceptional profit on the sale of its speciality chemicals business to ICI last year. Mr FitzGerald said the turmoil in the Far East had not had a material effect on the business last year but would hit the group in 1998. However, he added that it may provide scope to make acquisitions of distressed companies in the region. The strength of sterling cost the company £200m last year.

Mr FitzGerald refused to be drawn on his plans for the group's £3.2bn cash pile. He repeated that the company's strategy was to use the funds to acquire businesses in its key product markets of food and personal care in developing markets.

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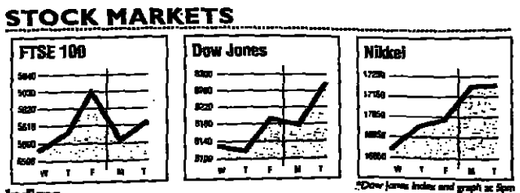
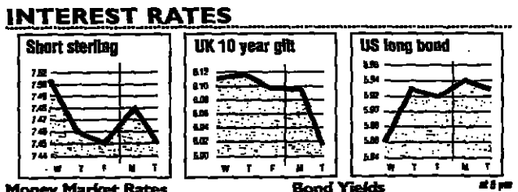
STOCK MARKETS



Indices

Index	Close	Change	Change(%)	52 wk high	52 wk low	Yield(%)
FTSE 100	5613.30	12.40	0.22	5675.10	4189.10	3.16
FTSE 250	4987.00	8.70	0.18	4980.60	4384.20	3.12
FTSE 350	2675.50	5.70	0.21	2686.20	2075.70	3.16
FTSE All Share	2606.18	5.41	0.21	2623.63	2056.07	3.14
FTSE SmallCap	2419.90	3.20	0.13	2416.70	2182.10	2.89
FTSE Hedging	1313.70	3.00	0.23	1346.50	1225.20	3.26
FTSE AIM	994.80	4.00	0.40	1138.00	965.90	1.03
Dow Jones	8289.63	108.12	1.32	8299.03	6356.78	1.67
Nikkei	17205.09	0.09	0.00	20910.79	14488.21	0.90
Hang Seng	10859.67	-13.48	-0.12	16820.31	7909.13	3.62
Dax	4523.75	-39.80	-0.87	4576.55	3156.17	1.74

INTEREST RATES



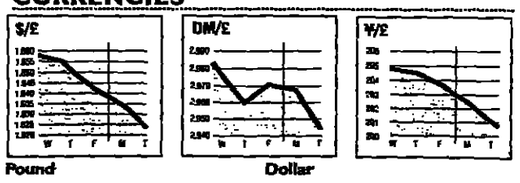
Money Market Rates / **Bond Yields** (at 5 pm)

Index	3 month	1 yr chg	1 year	1 yr chg	10 year	1 yr chg	Long bond	1 yr chg
UK	7.50	1.19	7.44	0.69	6.02	-1.15	6.03	-1.31
US	5.63	0.12	5.70	-0.11	5.63	-0.77	5.93	-0.78
Japan	0.84	0.34	0.82	0.25	1.96	-0.59	2.60	-0.55
Germany	3.52	0.37	3.79	0.56	5.08	-0.54	5.65	-0.80

MAIN PRICE CHANGES

Rises	Price (p)	Chg (p)	% Chge	Falls	Price (p)	Chg (p)	% Chge
Cookson Grp	217.00	28.00	14.81	Dixons Grp	539.00	30.00	5.79
PizzaExpress	769.00	47.50	6.58	Orange	334.50	15.50	4.53

CURRENCIES



Pound				Dollar			
Dollar	1.6237	-1.08c	1.6395	Sterling	0.6159	+0.41p	0.6099
D-Mark	2.9437	-2.51pf	2.7134	D-Mark	1.8107	-0.59pf	1.6553
Yen	200.74	+2.09	201.56	Yen	123.57	+0.56	122.85
£ index	104.20	-0.20	97.00	$ index	108.10	+0.80	102.70

OTHER INDICATORS

* at 5 pm	Close	Chg	Yr Ago		Index	Chg	Yr ago	Next Rpt
Brent Oil ($)	14.70	0.03	20.97	GDP	113.90	3.10	110.48	Feb
Gold ($)	299.85	1.30	341.05	RPI	159.50	3.30	154.40	Feb
Silver ($)	7.14	-0.06	4.92	Base Rates		7.25	6.00	

www.bloomberg.com/uk source: Bloomberg

TOURIST RATES

Australia (dollars)	2.3249	Italy (lira)	2.855
Austria (schillings)	20.21	Japan (yen)	199.77
Belgium (francs)	59.35	Malta (lira)	0.6265
Canada ($)	2.2823	Netherlands (guilders)	3.2414
Cyprus (pounds)	0.8424	Norway (kroner)	12.08
Denmark (kroner)	11.03	Portugal (escudos)	292.48
Finland (markka)	8.7887	Spain (pesetas)	243.70
France (francs)	9.6527	South Africa (rand)	7.7192
Germany (marks)	2.8904	Sweden (kroner)	13.00
Greece (drachmae)	456.52	Switzerland (francs)	2.3322
Hong Kong ($)	12.25	Turkey (lira)	350,215
Ireland (punts)	1.1425	USA ($)	1.5950

Source: Thomas Cook
Rates for indication purposes only

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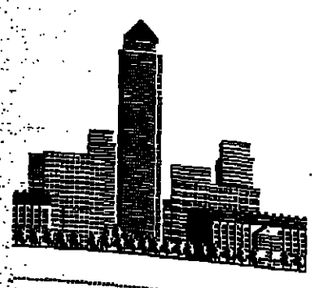


OUTLOOK

ON WHY THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD REJECT RAILTRACK'S HIGH-SPEED PROPOSAL, NOMURA'S FAILED BID FOR ENERGY GROUP, AND THE BONANZA OF SWITCHING TO DIGITAL

Cut-price rail link would be worse than nothing

On the basis that half a Channel Tunnel Rail Link is better than none at all, Railtrack has come up with a cut-price answer to John Prescott's dreams. It is offering to build the link and open it on time in 2003 for just £1.4bn. This is a third of the capital cost estimated by London & Continental Railways before its plans hit the buffers with a nasty bang.

There is only one snag. Railtrack's high speed line will link Paris and Brussels, not with the centre of London but with a hamlet in the north Kent countryside called Southfleet. From there, Eurostar passengers will complete the journey in more stately fashion, travelling on existing track to Waterloo International, not a gleaming new terminus at St Pancras.

The beauty of the scheme for a cash-strapped Government is its modest cost. Without the expensive business of having to tunnel under central London, Railtrack reckons it can build the link with perhaps just a third of the £1.2bn LCR originally asked for until it came back and doubled its estimate of the amount of public subsidy needed.

But unless Mr Prescott is desperate, which for all we know he may well be after his dowsing at the Brit Awards, he will have no difficulty dismissing the scheme, which has more holes in it than a Eurostar traffic forecast. First, the cut-price link would shave just 15 minutes off the journey time to Paris.

That is neither enough to give Eurostar a decisive edge over the airlines, nor a smart use of £1.4bn or whatever the final bill would come to with rolled up financing costs.

Second, the shortened link would not provide the increase in capacity for South East commuter services that is an integral part of the full-blown version. Third, it would not free up existing rail capacity in the south east, so there would be no chance of getting more freight off the road and onto rail. Nor finally would a high speed link that ended at Southfleet be much use for all those who would some day like Eurostar services to run north of London.

Since Mr Prescott's ministerial responsibilities include the environment and the regions, points three and four will not have been lost on him. So from virtually every standpoint, half a Channel Tunnel Rail Link would almost certainly be worse than none at at all. Mr Prescott may reluctantly have to agree.

One bite too far for Nomura

It looks as if Nomura Securities and its high earning head of principal finance, Guy Hands, have finally tried to bite off more than they are capable of chewing. Last night they were blaming price for their withdrawal from the bidding for Energy Group, but the reasons must have been regulatory in equal measure. Anything tabled by Nomura looked certain to end up before the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. Nomura would have needed to bid very high indeed to persuade investors to await the uncertain outcome of such an investigation while PacifiCorp's £4bn alternative offer is already there for the taking.

Nomura's shopping list in the UK has so far included a 5,500 strong chain of pubs, 57,000 Ministry of Defence homes, a train leasing company and the William Hill betting shops chain. In each case the assets have been paid for by "securitising" the income stream in the form of bonds, which are then sold to Nomura clients. This sounds like an impressive piece of rocket science but in fact the underlying concept is both simple and probably suspect.

In essence Nomura makes the companies pay for themselves by issuing bonds (debt by any other name) against the security of the assets and the income they produce. Equity is replaced with debt and in the process Nomura earns a whacking great commission, some of which goes to paying the reputed £40m per annum salary of Mr Hands. In the roaring 1980s this used to be called a highly leveraged buyout, and perhaps unsurprisingly, many of these things came to grief. In the sophisticated 90s, we have a more refined and less offensive way of describing it - securitisation. But it's the same thing.

So far this hasn't really mattered. It is hard to see on the sort of assets bought by Nomura up until now how anyone other than Nomura and its clients would be much harmed if it failed to work out. But Energy Group, which owns Eastern Electricity, one of the largest of the 12 regional electricity companies, is another matter.

Anything likely to be tabled by Nomura would not have amounted to a conventional change of ownership. However it was dressed up, inevitably it would have been a glorious piece of financial engineering designed essentially for the greater enrichment of Nomura and its Mr Hands. The Government was never likely to allow a public utility to be asset stripped in this way. Even the ingenuity of Mr Hands was going to struggle to find a way round this obstacle. It may well be that this high profile failure will come to mark the high tide of his ambition.

Switching off analogue

Amid all the hype about commercial opportunities of digital television, it's worth remembering that the biggest winner from the whole process may well be the government. Even if you couldn't care a less about BSkyB's promise of a 200-channel revolution, or that exciting package of programmes soon to be available from British Digital Broadcasting (BDB), there's no escaping from digital. Some time in the next millennium, watching five channels on your old TV will cease to be an option. Why? Because the government will have switched off the analogue signal that now supplies them.

The reasons for doing so will become abundantly clear on Thursday, when the government publishes a discussion paper on the issue. Those parts of the radio spectrum used by analogue television are worth a fortune. If the government can get everyone to switch to digital television, it can flog off the analogue spectrum to mobile phone and data communications operators. Some reckon the auction could deposit as much as £6bn in the public coffers.

This in itself ought to make the likes of BSkyB and BDB are very happy. If all us couch potatoes know our tellies are going to be worthless - the 1996 Broadcasting Act suggested the analogue signal be switched off five years after digital television was launched, or when half the population had digital TV, whichever is the sooner - they are more likely to consider buying a set-top box and signing up to all those new channels with dispatch.

Not content with a dominant market position, however, they want more. Why not, they argue, use some of that £6bn to subsidise the cost of digital televisions, so that even the less fortunate among us who can't afford to join the brave new information age will not be left out? Surely Tony Blair couldn't disagree?

Bunkum. Digital satellite and digital terrestrial are already enough of a license to print money without handing out a public subsidy on top. If the government really wants to be fair, it should leave the analogue signal on for another decade and let viewers make their own minds up. But in the end money always speaks and £6bn is a mighty tempting sum.

Labour hits inflation target for first time

Big bargains in the January sales were a key factor in the latest figures.

Diane Coyle and **Michael Harrison** report

Inflation was on target last month for the first time since Labour won power in May thanks to record price discounts in the new year sales.

The drop in the price of clothing and footwear last month was the biggest since 1947, while the price of household goods such as fridges and furniture recorded the biggest fall since comparable records began in 1956.

The scale of the price discounts in the sales brought the underlying measure of inflation down to its 2.5 per cent target for the first time since the general election. Analysts now believe bargain-hunting by consumers will keep interest rates from climbing any further.

"If you wanted a sign that interest rates have reached their peak, this must be it. There's a certain poetry about these figures," said Simon Briscoe, an economist at Nikko Europe.

Although some experts remained cautious ahead of today's Inflation Report from the Bank of England and official figures for pay growth, the financial markets celebrated the good news on inflation. Gilt prices surged and the pound shed three pfennigs against the German mark to end at DM2.94.

The underlying inflation rate fell to 2.5 per cent last month from 2.7 per cent in December. The headline rate, which includes mortgage interest payments, fell to 3.3 per cent from 3.6 per cent.

The main downward pressures came from prices for food, clothing and household goods, along with housing costs. Even though some recent mortgage rises were still feeding through, they were smaller than a year ago.

The price of seasonal foods fell by 0.4 per cent, the first January decline since 1972. The decline took the annual inflation rate in this category sharply lower following some big jumps in recent months.

But the most dramatic developments stemmed from the much bigger price cuts in the sales this year than in the past, which accounted for half of the decline in overall inflation. Yesterday's figures for prices in the high street put into context the boom in sales reported by the British Retail Consortium's monthly survey earlier this week, indicating that the soaring turnover was driven by bargains.

The scale of price discounting in clothes and consumer electronics in January has increased virtually every year since 1986 as shoppers have become more bargain-conscious. Clothing prices fell by 6.6 per cent compared with a drop of 4.2 per cent in January 1997, while the fall in household goods prices this year was 3.9 per cent compared with 3.6 per cent last year.

The pattern is now for prices to rise in December and February, but fall by more in January. A similar phenomenon takes place on a smaller scale in the summer sales for clothing.

Price is right: Some observers believe bargain-hunting will keep interest rates from climbing higher Photograph: Nicola Kurtz

Adam Cole, an economist at HSBC James Capel, said: "Consumers' guerilla tactics forced retailers to cut prices of clothing and household goods to an extent not seen since the war."

David Walton at Goldman Sachs said: "There is strategic shopping but also strategic selling. Retailers put their prices up before Christmas."

He added: "I'm not convinced consumers have the upper hand. There is no real sign of a margin squeeze in retailing." Mr Walton, who is one of the City analysts most convinced the cost of borrowing will have to climb again, admitted he saw no prospect of this until at least May.

Others were much more confident about the interest rate outlook. John O'Sullivan at NatWest Markets said: "I don't see any danger of inflation straying too far from its target over the next two years."

The one remaining area of concern is potential pay pressure, with many analysts predicting that today's figures for the jobs market will show underlying average earnings growth will climb to 5 per cent because of higher bonuses. Whether pay growth stays that high will depend on how much further unemployment can fall, and, in turn, how sharply the economy slows down as the year progresses.

The subdued picture on inflation was further underscored by a CBI regional trends survey showing that domestic prices fell in most parts of the country over the last four months. The survey also recorded a decline in manufacturing unit costs in all areas.

As expected, the strength of sterling took its toll on exporters with all regions of the country reporting a decline in export prices and all but three regions experiencing a decline in export orders. The sharpest falls were in Northern Ireland, the North and the North-west.

Buoyant domestic demand came to the rescue of most regions, however, with manufacturers in seven out of the eleven areas recording a rise in total orders over the four-month period. Order books were healthiest in East Anglia, the South-west, East Midlands, the North, Scotland and the South-east.

Companies in eight regions expect export orders to fall over the next four months, partly due to currency factors and partly to the Asian economic crisis.

Increase in air passenger levy 'will cost 12,000 jobs'

The doubling of air passenger duty will cost 12,000 jobs and deprive the UK economy of more than £360m in foreign exchange earnings, according to an independent study by accountants Deloitte & Touche. The UK could lose more than 500,000 visitors a year if the increase in the levy is not scrapped. Together with the strong pound, the UK's international tourism receipts could fall by up to 5 per cent. Air passenger duty was increased last year to £10 per passenger departing for destinations within the EU and £20 for passengers travelling further afield.

Merger spending hits record

Merger mania has hit the City, pushing the stock market to new heights. In the last quarter of 1998, UK companies spent £15bn buying domestic rivals, the highest figure ever recorded, according to figures from the Office of National Statistics. The numbers were buoyed by the £12.5bn acquisition of Grand Metropolitan by Guinness to create Diageo. However expenditure on acquisitions overseas by UK companies fell to £4.3bn in the final quarter. The largest deal was the acquisition of Nycomed, the healthcare group, by Amersham International for £1.6bn.

Allied warns on liqueur sales

Allied Domecq's shares slipped 4p to 565p after it warned that US sales of Kahlua, its coffee liqueur, had been disappointing and refused to comment further on possible spirits mergers with rival drinks groups. Allied Domecq said that the strong pound would mean profits for the six months to February would fall slightly due to the impact of the strong pound, which will cost the group £50m in the current financial year.

Nationwide internet offer

Nationwide, the world's biggest building society, is launching itself as an internet service provider, it announced yesterday. The mutual society will be the first high street financial group to provide access to the internet. The service will provide up to five megabytes of web space, five e-mail addresses, access to the worldwide web and on-line banking.

Inn Business profits up

Inn Business, the pub retailer, yesterday proved that reports of the death of the local had been greatly exaggerated by announcing a rise in pre-tax profits to £6.5m (£2.7m) for the year to November. Inn Business, which has expanded its estate rapidly through acquisitions over the last few years to 473 pubs, is now looking for more purchases. Analysts forecast current year profits of £7.85m.

3i tops buyout league

3i, the venture capitalist, arranged equity for more UK management buyouts (MBOs) in 1997 than any other company, according to *Acquisitions Monthly*, the trade magazine. 3i was involved in 63 UK MBOs, almost four times more than NatWest Equity Partners, its closest rival. 3i's deals were worth £437m, NatWest's were worth £237m.

James Capel cuts Asia jobs

HSBC James Capel Asia, a subsidiary of HSBC Holdings, the banking group, is to cut around 27 jobs in its sales and research departments. A spokesperson said the cuts are a result of "region-wide restructuring of our activity". Ten jobs will go in Hong Kong, six in Indonesia, two in London and one in New York. Singapore, the Philippines, Taiwan and Thailand will also be affected, but Korea and Malaysia will not be hit.

City 'will be ready for euro'

The City of London will be ready for the introduction of the single European currency and will offer a full range of euro services in wholesale financial markets, David Clementi, Deputy Governor of the Bank of England, told US investors last night. He emphasised London's strength as a financial centre and said the City would act as a "link between New York and the euro".

Investors back Argos's £540,000 man

By Nigel Cope
City Correspondent

Institutional investors in Argos, the besieged retailer, yesterday applauded the appointment of Stuart Rose as acting chief executive and said his £540,000 pay package was "miraculously low".

Mr Rose will receive the money – an annual salary of £320,000, a supplement of £40,000 and a joining fee of £180,000 – even if Argos capitulates to the £1.6bn hostile bid from Great Universal Stores.

One fund manager said: "I think it is quite modest. He could have negotiated for more." Another referred to Mr Rose's pay deal as "miraculously low given the circumstances".

Another referred to comments that Mr Rose would only have to add 0.2p to the Argos share price to cover his remuneration. "I think he probably will deliver an increase in shareholder value and so the deal will not look excessive. If he gets you the extra cash then it is not too outrageous. He has to lead the defence and possibly run the company."

Institutions said Argos had done the right thing by bringing in an experienced retailer to defend against the bid. Chief executive Mike Smith is seriously ill.

One said: "This is a plus for Argos and a minus for GUS on the present terms. The board has acted sensibly because they would have been fighting the bid with one arm tied behind their back without a full-time chief executive."

Institutions said Mr Rose was a good choice and highly regarded, even though he had had a low profile when he was a director at Burton Group until his departure in July.

GUS's cash offer is pitched at 570p per share, compared to a closing Argos price of 626p, unchanged yesterday. Mr Rose spent yesterday seeing institutions and in meetings with Schroders, the group's adviser.

Lloyd's poised to defeat names in High Court 'refusenik' case

By Terry Macalister

Lloyd's of London looks poised to win a critical High Court battle with over 600 "refusenik" names who owe the insurance market £130m. Victory in a 10-month legal struggle would allow Lloyd's to proceed against names and then pay off a big part of an expensive £300m loan facility. A final two-day hearing starts this morning with judgment expected by the end of next week.

The 616 names, individuals who traditionally invested in Lloyd's, have refused to provide cash owed to Equitas, the £11.7bn reinsurance vehicle created by Lloyd's to take on the market's pre-1992 losses. They are part of a wider but dwindling group of investors who have refused to pay. A Lloyd's victory would effectively mean the end of mass resistance in the UK.

They allege they were defrauded because Lloyd's recruited them into the market in the early 1980s without warning that huge losses from asbestosis were about to hit insurance profits.

A spokesman for Lloyd's was optimistic about the chances of success. "We have an excellent case. The only thing that would prevent a victory is if the defendants can prove there is an error in the documents which calculate the amount each name must pay. We are sure they will not."

Even high-profile defendants such as John Pascoe admit that defeat looks likely. Last night he said: "I will not be able to pay anything like the £500,000 Lloyd's claims I owe them and how would I ever be able to afford £6m to launch a fraud suit? Names have been totally shafted by Equitas and the current judicial process."

In another twist, the defendants are expected to argue that Mr Justice Tuckey is compromised because his brother in law Jeremy Hardie, chairman of WH Smith, was active in Lloyd's for many years.

BOC shares plunge after first-quarter profits drop

By Clifford German

Shares in BOC plunged 6 per cent yesterday and analysts again revised forecasts for the full year sharply downwards after the group announced a 9 per cent drop in profits to £93.5m in the first quarter of the current year.

Denis Rosenkranz, chief executive, blamed the results on the strength of sterling and the poor performance of the Ohmeda health-care division, which was sold two weeks ago to a consortium of buyers for £640m

So far profits have been worse affected than sales but the fall in the value of overseas profits alone cost the group just over £6m, while profits from Ohmeda plunged to £5.3m in the three months to the end of December from £13m at the same stage last year.

Excluding Ohmeda and the currency effects, turnover was up 9 per cent and operating profits from the continuing businesses would have been up 7 per cent, the company claimed. Exchange rate losses, mainly in Far Eastern currencies, wiped out profit increases in local currencies in spite of sharply higher sales in the vacuum technology and the distribution businesses. The negative impact of exchange rates will cost about £17m this year, assuming rates change little from current levels, according to Tony Isaacs, finance director.

COMPANY RESULTS

	Turnover £	Pre-tax £	EPS	Dividend
Aurstrat (I)	30.92m (24.69m)	-0.879m (1.3m)	-1.14p (1.62p)	0.2p (0.2p)
BOC (FI)	902.3m (893.9m)	93.5m (102.7m)	12.47p (13.49p)	
Future Integrated (I)	4.58m (2.12m)	-0.179m (-0.29m)	-1.37p (-0.25p)	
Headway (I)	11.31m (10.85m)	0.872m (0.603m)	3.9p (2.8p)	0.85p (0.35p)
Inn Business Grp (F)	32.5m (15.1m)	6.33m (2.23m)	5.76p (4.48p)	1.88p (1.35p)
Powvair (F)	70.77m (55.43m)	6.88m (4.15m)	18.0p (11.0p)	6.2p (5.6p)
Reuters (F)	2.88bn (2.91bn)	826.0m (852.0m)	24.0p (30.4p)	13p (11.75p)
Unilever (F)	66.34bn (67.04bn)	4.72m (2.66m)	44.5p (21.5p)	8.42p
Zetland (M)	13.82m (11.66m)	1.54m (0.856m)	- (-)	

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

EDITED BY ANDREW YATES

Unilever's new approach pays off

It may only be 17 months since Niall FitzGerald took over as chairman of Unilever but shareholders in the consumer goods giant have certainly enjoyed the difference.

In that period Unilever shares have significantly outperformed the market, increasing by around 50 per cent. Mr FitzGerald's focus on total shareholder return, a method of comparing *performance using share price* appreciation and dividends, has pleased the City and his more muscular approach to management appears to be paying off.

Underperformers are being subjected to more rigorous scrutiny and are being given the opportunity to improve, be run for cash or be sold. The rump of laggards, which constituted 20 per cent of Unilever's sales in 1996, has now been reduced to 13 per cent, or around £2bn of sales.

The plan is to concentrate on higher-margin businesses in mature markets like Europe and the US while investing in emerging markets such as the South-east Asia and central and eastern Europe.

The message from yesterday's results *was that the strategy is on track.* Pre-tax profits of £4.78bn included a £2.4bn profit on the sale of the speciality chemicals business to ICI last year. But stripping out currency factors and ex*ceptionals, profits* rose by 13 per cent.

Management's confidence in the business is demonstrated by their decision to increase spending on advertising and promotion to a record £3.6bn, or 12 per cent of sales. Volumes were stronger in the final quarter than at the beginning of the year and the cost-cutting is starting to show through.

The big question with Unilever re*mains its £3.2bn cash pile. Mr Fitz-Gerald would not be drawn on plans* yesterday beyond saying that if no suitable acquisitions could be found within the next two years, the cash would be returned to shareholders. The bet*ting is that the funds will be spent on* a number of smaller deals in emerging markets rather than one blockbuster deal. The financial crisis in Asia could provide acquisition opportunities there.

However the turmoil is a double edged sword. It will hit Unilever's profits this year, though countries such as Thailand and Indonesia only account for around 3 per cent of groups sales.

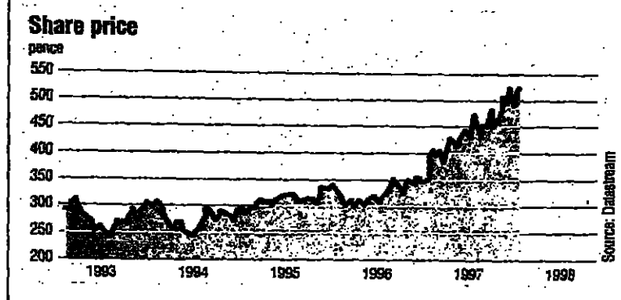
On full year forecasts of £2.9bn, the shares, *up 1.75p to 524p yesterday,* trade on a forward rating of 22. That is a sizeable premium to the market which leaves no room for error. Prob*ably too expensive for now.*

Unilever: At a glance

Market value: £40.8bn, share price 524p (+1.75p)

Trading record	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
Turnover (£bn)	27.8	29.6	31.5	33.5	29.7
Pre-tax profits (£bn)	1.9	2.4	2.3	2.65	4.72
Earnings per share (p)	17.3	20.1	21.4	21.4	44.5
Dividends per share (p)	6.25	6.7	8.0	8.01	8.42

Share price



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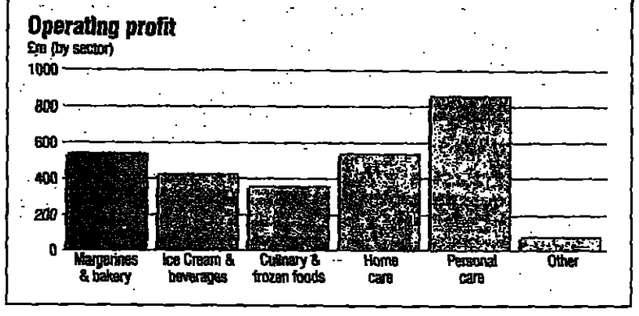

Reuters' fall looks overdone

Spare a thought for Peter Job. Two years ago, the biggest headache the chief ex*ecutive of Reuters had was deciding* what to do with all that spare cash. Since then, however, the financial information group has been beset by problems.

First came the strong pound. Then the Far Eastern economies faltered. To *top it all,* Reuters was hit by allegations of stealing information from arch-rival Bloomberg. The result is that Reuters shares, which closed up 10.5p at 572p yesterday, have lost almost a third of *their value in the past 18 months.*

On fundamentals, this fall looks wildly overdone. Although pre-tax profits for the year to last December *fell by 4 per cent to £626m on turnover down 1 per cent to £2.88bn,* this is largely down to currencies and a number of other one-off items.

Strip out the effects of sterling – which reduced the value of Reuters' overseas *earnings – and revenues rose by 9 per* cent while profits were up 11 per cent. Ignore the cost of preparing terminals for the millennium date change and the switch to EMU, not to mention Reuters' adoption of the new accounting standard, and profits look even better.

The real cloud over the shares, however, is the US inquiry. Although Reuters tried to calm the markets with a statement last week, investors remain *largely in the dark about the extent of* the investigation, and its possible implications. As a result, they are assuming the worst. And until the uncertainty lifts in a few months' time, *Reuters shares look like dead money.*

All the same, there is value to be had. For the coming year, brokers are pencilling in flat profits, placing the shares on a forward p/e ratio, ignoring accounting changes, of 20, which looks cheap compared to the highly rated media sector.

Then there is the prospect of sharing in the £1.5bn the group is planning to hand back to shareholders in a few weeks' time. The Bloomberg enquiry remains a worry, but it's hard to see the shares falling much further. Good value.

Hanover has its attractions

Hanover International, the upmarket *hotel group, has been in the bid* spotlight over the last few weeks. Jarvis Hotels was rumoured to be running a slide-rule over the group again, after having its original advances repelled last year.

Word is that Jarvis, which certainly has plenty of cash to spend on acquisitions, has had another look at Hanover but would *probably only do* an agreed deal rather than launch a hostile bid. While it hasn't ruled out a bid, the chances of an offer seem to be receding for the time being. So where does that leave *Hanover?*

Despite a sharp rise in the share price to 125.5p over the last few weeks, Hanover is still trading at a steep discount to analysts' estimates of current net asset value of around 200p. Its portfolio of four-star hotels is, by and large, in good locations, a fact that has not escaped Jarvis and may attract other bidders.

Even without the added *attraction* of a possible quick killing, there are other reasons to invest in Hanover. The shares have fallen from a high of 161.5p last year after a refurbishment at its Hinckley hotel was delayed due *to financing problems.* But the hotel should benefit from the addition of 78 new rooms this year. And room yields across the group should rise strongly, with plenty of scope to increase occupancy rates.

Analysts have downgraded profit forecasts by nearly a £1m to around £1.85m for 1997. However, Hanover should hit the recovery path this year. Greig Middleton forecasts 1998 profits *of £3.5m, putting the shares on a* prospective p/e ratio of 13, falling to just seven. The steep discount both to the market and the hotel sector looks unjustified. And continued bid speculation should underpin the share price.

PEOPLE & BUSINESS

JOHN WILLCOCK

Pity **John Pexton**, well-respected managing director of Lambert Fenchurch's marine division. He is has been at the centre of an *inquiry* by the "zero tolerance" regulators from Lloyd's of London insurance market.

But after months of work the particular Lloyd's investigator assigned to the case has switched jobs. *This leaves Mr Pexton to worry* about whether the probe will be delayed, or worse, started again.

Mr Pexton has already been interviewed personally about the problem but his company *remain confident* he will be exonerated. A spokesman for Lambert Fenchurch says: "We are still waiting for a transcript of the interview. But we believe it went very well. The company has not done anything wrong."

The investigation follows allegations that certain profit commissions in the US were kept by the Fenchurch group (before its merger with Lowndes Lambert last year) rather than *handed back to clients as they should have been.*

Roger Jones has retired as managing director of Woolworths after 40 years with the stores group, and is succeeded by his heir apparent **Roger Holmes**.

Mr Holmes joined Kingfisher, owner of Woolworths, in 1994 as B&Q's finance director. Mr Holmes was previously with McKinsey & Co, with seven years international experience in retailing and consumer goods.

Mr Jones recalls that the *high street was a* very different place when he joined FW Woolworth's Kensington High Street branch as a management trainee in 1954.

"Everything was based around personal service then," he says. Woolworths shops were *dominated* by large wooden counters, each manned by a senior, a deputy and an assistant. "We employed twice as many people as today, if not more."

The other big difference was that Woolworths was a large food retailer, long before the modern supermarkets came on the scene, with 40 per cent of its sales coming from food of one kind and another.

Woolworths was a pioneer in management training, he says, including store display, customer service and localised *purchasing.*

Mr Jones has already turned down a handful of offers of non-executive directorships, saying he is determined to enjoy his retirement. This will centre around bringing down the golf handicap and visiting big European cities – "without going inside any shopping centres or any hotels," he says, with feeling.

I doubt Mr Jones will be spending much time at Loch Lomond Golf Club in Scotland. The American-owned club, which has a course designed by Tom Weiskopf and Jay Morrish, has recently been expensively redeveloped, and is now offering membership – at a mere $1m a throw.

The special "director memberships", in the form of 25-year debentures, are only being offered to a maximum of 12 people. In return the members will get $120,000 a year to spend on golf, food and beverage, and accommodation.

The club's owners boast that Loch Lomond is "an unusual and successful combination of Scottish tradition and American *entrepreneurial flair*". The latter certainly, but I wasn't aware that it was a Scottish tradition to pay a cool million for the odd round of golf.

Blockbuster Video, watch out. Two Insead MBA graduates have banded together to launch FilmBox, a company which installs machines for renting out videos, CD Roms and computer games on a 24-hour basis.

Eldar Tuvey, an Israeli born former Goldman Sachs corporate financier, and Old Etonian **Harry Eastwood**, a management consultant, have just raised £450,000 in private funds to back their company.

"We have four of the machines installed on a trial basis, and we aim to expand that to around 200 over the next couple of years. We're mostly talking to the supermarket chains," says Mr Tuvey.

The machines, which do not require any human assistance and take credit cards, are already widely popular in Italy, where there are over 10,000 in use, he says.

Peter Rosengard, a co-founder of London's Comedy Store and an insurance salesman, helped raise £350,00 for the company from his City contacts. FilmBox is based in Hammersmith, and Mr Tuvey wants at least three to five years' growth before considering a float, perhaps on Ofex or AIM.

"We give the machines to the shops and they get an uplift in sales – and it's all without staff problems," concludes the 27-year-old entrepreneur.

"Globalisation" has been a business buzz-word for some time now, but I hadn't realised it applied so much to liquidators. **Stephen Taylor** is the Coopers & Lybrand partner in charge of the international insolvency practice based in London, a job which includes sending liquidators out to the far corners of the globe to deal with companies that go belly up.

"We're very busy in Asia at the moment, while Russia, the Ukraine and central Europe are also busy," says Mr Taylor. "There's also quite a lot going on in South America and Africa, especially South Africa." Now what's "You're bust" in Afrikaans?

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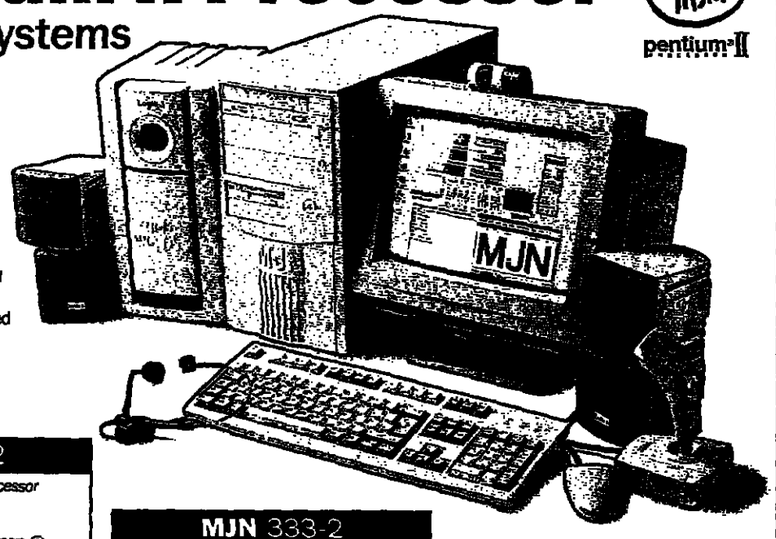

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Cookson surges ahead on stories of bid action

MARKET REPORT

DEREK PAIN

Cookson, the industrial materials group which has underperformed the stock market for nearly two years, enjoyed a cracking run as stories swirled of bid action and disposals.

The shares, in brisk trading, followed Monday's late 6p gain with a 28p rush to 217p. Last year they hit 262.5p and were riding at 327p in 1996 before doubts set in about the group's direction.

An overseas predator was the popular guess but there was also talk of a major sale, possibly part of the group's extensive ceramics operation.

Cookson has been slowly streamlining, with a number of acquisitions and disposals. Its last deal was the £12.4m sale of a US swimming pool products distributor.

In December Richard Oster quit as chairman with a £2.9m payoff after just two months in the job. A disagreement over the pace of the rationalisation process was cited as the reason. Mr Oster had previously been chief executive and was responsible for saving the group from disaster after he arrived in 1991.

Most equities experienced a quiet, uneventful session. Footsie, despite losing some of its sparkle when a late sell programme hit the market, ended 12.4 points higher at 5,613.3, drawing encouragement from a Dow Jones average forging ahead during London hours. The supporting indices reached new highs.

Dixons was the best performing blue chip, gaining 30p to 539.5p. The British Retail Consortium survey suggesting television and video sales had been strong after disappointing Christmas trading was the spur. Dixons, when warning about poor festive sales, said profits would be below expectations; the shares touched 720p in October. The consortium's comments also helped **Kingfisher** to close above 1,000p for the first time, up 21p at 1,016p.

Orange, on the expected sale of British Aerospace's 21 per cent stake, improved 15.5p to 335.5p, another peak. **British Steel** put on 3.5p to 141.5p as SBC Warburg drew attention to high-yielding shares. **Rolls-Royce** fell 5.5p to 199p with NatWest Securities offering sell advice. **RioTinto** lost 24p to 805p on the copper weakness and strike threats.

BOC, the chemical group, slumped 66p to 905p following interim results. **Imperial Chemical Industries**, supported by US investors possibly disillusioned with BOC, rose 30p to 1,013p.

Disappointing **British Petroleum** figures left the shares 21p off at 793p.

The **P&O** shipping group steamed 16p higher to 735p after Panmure Gordon suggested an 880p target.

Queens Moat Houses added 1p to 16.25p as NatWest Securities drew attention to the once high flying hotel chain, slowly emerging from disasters which almost overwhelmed it five years ago.

NatWest acknowledges that QMH is unlikely to pay any dividends for some years but rates the shares a speculative buy. It says they may not "meet every institution's investment grade but for special situation funds QMH represents an outstanding opportunity as a geared play on continued hotel asset price inflation". The shares are described as "an extremely interesting speculative buy".

IT shares paused for breath after their high storming display. Granville Davies, in a detailed review of the new sector, says its shares are still undervalued with potential growth not reflected in ratings. It reports that the near 25 per cent progress scored by the IT index is almost entirely due to gains achieved by larger groups.

"The conclusion is that many smaller but potentially more rapidly growing IT stocks have been overlooked by the investment community". **Misys**, the computer group thought to be ready for Footsie membership, fell 77.5p to 2,240p; it touched 2,502.5p last week.

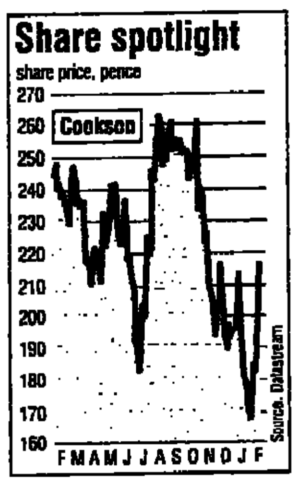
PizzaExpress, on Monday's results, rose 47.5p to 769p, and **First Leisure**, prompted by reports of restaurant expansion and sale of its bingo division put on 10.5p to 313p. **Body Shop International**, on the departure of its top US executive, lost 7.5p to 115.5p; **Biocompatibles International**'s woes continued with a 35p fall to 180p; **Powderject** rose 9.5p to 180p; ... a 232p peak after obtaining US clearance to start tests using needle-less injections to administer a local anaesthetic produced by **Chiroscience**, up 2p to 261.5p.

Chieftain, a building materials group, hardened 14p to 119.5p after putting itself up for sale. **Intelligent Environments**, a software company, improved 9.5p to 34p following reduced losses and an intriguing consultancy link with BT.

Freeport Leisure, running factory shopping villages, advanced 15p to 246.5p, a peak. Interim results, due next week, may be accompanied by indications of further shopping area developments. **Dalkeith Inns**, a cash shell, moved to 28.5p, against the 25.5p bid from its controlling shareholders.

Share spotlight

share price, pence



TAKING STOCK

Johnson Fry, the fund manager, gained 6p to 139.5p. In December the shares slumped to 85p after a warning of losses. The recovery is, in part, due to the feeling that JF is unlikely to remain independent much longer in the frenzied financial climate.

Dean Corporation, the building and property services group, added 2p to 11.5p after 250,000 shares held by former director Lyndon Chapman were placed with an institution. A trading statement is expected soon.

Profits of retailer Revelation Piccadilly should soar from £270,000 to just over £1m in the year ending this month, says researcher Hardman & Co, which is looking for £1.5m next time. The shares are 5p.

Shares of Monsoon, the fashion chain, are expected to hit 210p when dealings start today from the 198p sale price.

Share Price Data

Prices are in sterling except where stated. The yield is the latest twelve months' declared gross dividend as a percentage of the share price. The price/earnings (P/E) ratio is the shareprice divided by last year's earnings per share, excluding extraordinary items but including exceptionals. Other details: Ex rights; x Ex-dividend; a Ex-all; s Suspended; p Partly Paid; np Nil Paid; ^AIM. Gilt Prices are Bloomberg Generics. Source: Bloomberg

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0891 calls cost 50p per minute.

(TIS plc, London EC2A 4PJ).

Seaq volume: 822.7m trades 62,711 Gilts index 1033.33 +0.49

Market Leaders: Top 20 volumes
at 5:00pm

Stock	Vol	Stock	Vol	Stock	Vol	Stock	Vol
HSBC Hldgs	168.17m	Brit Steel	16.09m	Unilever	9.45m	Diageo	7.57m
Natl Grid	70.60m	Brit Telecom	15.82m	Brit Airways	8.97m	Halifax	7.48m
Centrica	33.54m	Vodafone Grp	12.62m	Reuters Hldgs	8.85m	Gen Elec	7.44m
Brit Petroleum	24.79m	Shell Transport	12.46m	BG	8.76m	Reed Ind	7.33m
BTR	17.44m	ASDA Grp	11.51m	Smithkline Beech	8.65m	Tadpole Tech	6.98m

FTSE 100 Index hour by hour

Open	5600.9		11:00	5600.8	Down 0.1	14:00	5606.1	Up 5.2
9:00	5599.5	Down 1.4	12:00	5609.6	Up 8.7	15:00	5605.0	Up 4.1
10:00	5616.3	Up 15.4	13:00	5601.4	Up 0.5	16:00	5609.5	Up 8.6
						Close	5613.3	Up 12.4

Alcoholic Beverages [illegible]

Banks, Merchant [illegible]

Banks, Retail [illegible]

Breweries Pubs & Rest [illegible]

Building/Construction [illegible]

Building Materials [illegible]

Chemicals [illegible]

Distributors [illegible]

Diversified Industrials [illegible]

Electricity [illegible]

Electronics [illegible]

Engineering [illegible]

Engineering Vehicles [illegible]

Extractive Industries [illegible]

Food Producers [illegible]

Gas Distribution [illegible]

Health Care [illegible]

Household Goods [illegible]

Insurance [illegible]

Investment Trusts [illegible]

Leisure & Hotels [illegible]

Life Assurance [illegible]

Media [illegible]

Oil Integrated [illegible]

Oil Exploration & Production [illegible]

Other Financial [illegible]

Paper & Printing [illegible]

Pharmaceuticals [illegible]

Property [illegible]

Retailers, Food [illegible]

Retailers, General [illegible]

Support Services [illegible]

Telecommunications [illegible]

Textiles & Apparel [illegible]

Tobacco [illegible]

Transport [illegible]

Water [illegible]

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Government Securities

Index-Linked [illegible]

Shorts [illegible]

Mediums [illegible]

Longs [illegible]

Perpetual [illegible]

Stock	Price	Chg(p)
Recent Issues		
Bovis	135.00	0.00
Marchpole	270.00	-1.00

source: Bloomberg
www.bloomberg.com/uk

26/UNIT TRUSTS

Fund | Sell | Buy | Yld

[illegible]

Foreign Exchange Rates

Country	Sterling Spot	1 month	3 month	Dollar Spot	1 month	3 month	D-Mark Spot
UK	1.0000			0.6159	0.6158	0.6156	0.3399
Australia	2.3817	2.3789	2.3731	1.4658	1.4672	1.4680	0.8094
Austria	20.698	20.665	20.598	12.748	12.746	12.741	7.0345
Belgium	60.710	60.530	60.148	37.390	37.333	37.207	20.633
Canada	2.3203	2.3157	2.3063	1.4290	1.4282	1.4266	0.7886
Denmark	11.209	11.177	11.113	6.9032	6.8937	6.8741	3.8094
ECU	1.4926	1.4892	1.4817	1.0877	1.0867	1.0910	0.8079
Finland	8.9260	8.8975	8.8400	5.4973	5.4577	5.4683	3.0336
France	9.862	9.833	9.770	6.0741	6.0643	6.0436	3.3519
Germany	2.9424	2.9334	2.9145	1.8122	1.8092	1.8029	1.0000
Greece	465.52	468.18	474.80	286.70	288.75	293.70	158.21
Hong Kong	12.565	12.559	12.606	7.7386	7.7456	7.7961	4.2704
Ireland	1.1729	1.1719	1.1692	1.3844	1.3835	1.3826	0.7640
Italy	2905.6	2902.9	2896.7	1789.5	1790.4	1791.8	987.50
Japan	200.69	199.62	197.32	123.60	123.12	122.08	68.206
Malaysia	5.8369	5.8326	5.8445	3.5948	3.5973	3.6153	1.9837
Mexico	13.775			8.4840			4.6817
Netherlands	3.3152	3.3048	3.2831	2.0418	2.0383	2.0309	1.1267
New Zealand	2.7458	2.7396	2.7265	0.5914	0.5897	0.5866	0.3263
Norway	12.254	12.218	12.146	7.5468	7.5354	7.5131	4.1646
Portugal	301.18	300.59	299.21	185.49	185.39	185.09	102.36
Saudi Arabia	6.0921	6.0856	6.0719	3.7520	3.7534	3.7560	2.0705
Singapore	2.6401	2.6384	2.6391	1.6260	1.6272	1.6325	0.8973
South Africa	7.9963	8.0412	8.1339	4.9260	4.9595	5.0315	2.7183
Spain	249.33	248.82	247.66	153.56	153.46	153.20	84.736
Sweden	13.186	13.157	13.099	8.1210	8.1149	8.1030	4.4814
Switzerland	2.3772	2.3655	2.3413	1.4640	1.4589	1.4483	0.8079
US	1.6237			1.0000			0.5518

Other Spot Rates

Country	Sterling	Dollar	Country	Sterling	Dollar
Argentina	1.6237	1.0000	Oman	0.6251	0.3850
Brazil	1.8287	1.1263	Pakistan	71.443	44.000
China	13.442	8.2789	Philippines	63.649	39.200
Czech Rep	55.706	34.308	Poland	5.7544	3.5440
Egypt	5.5162	3.3973	Qatar	5.9111	3.6405
Ghana	3722.3	2292.5	Russia	9803.9	6038.0
Hungary	336.07	206.98	South Korea	2571.9	1584.00
India	62.963	38.790	Taiwan	53.274	32.810
Indonesia	12096.8	7450.0	Thailand	73.148	45.050
Kuwait	0.4947	0.3047	Turkey	361566	222680
Nigeria	132.33	81.500	UAE	5.9630	3.6725

Interest Rates

UK		Germany		US		Japan	
Base	7.25%	Discount	2.50%	Prime	8.50%	Discount	0.50%
France		Lombard	4.50%	Discount	5.00%	Belgium	
Intervention	3.30%	Canada		Fed Funds	5.44%	Discount	2.75%
Italy		Prime	6.50%	Spain		Central	3.30%
Discount	5.50%	Discount	5.00%	10-d Repo	4.75%	Switzerland	
Netherlands		Denmark		Sweden		Discount	1.00%
SpAdvance	3.30%	Discount	3.50%	Repo(Ave)	4.35%	Lombard	3.00%

Bond Yields

Country	3 mth	chg	1 yr	chg	2 yr	chg	5 yr	chg	10 yr	chg
Australia	4.89	-0.05	4.90	-0.01	5.16	-0.01	5.53	-0.01	5.97	0.00
Belgium	3.57	-0.01	3.74	0.00	4.14	-0.01	4.53	0.00	5.20	-0.02
Canada	4.46	-0.03	4.98	-0.04	4.96	0.00	5.22	-0.02	5.46	0.00
ECU	4.39	-0.01	4.43	0.00	4.27	-0.03	4.65	-0.02	5.18	-0.04
France	0.00	0.00	3.59	-0.01	4.01	0.00	4.49	-0.01	5.08	-0.03
Germany	3.53	0.00	3.78	0.00	3.88	-0.01	4.54	-0.03	5.08	-0.03
Italy	5.69	-0.09	5.30	0.01	5.02	-0.02	5.03	-0.03	5.42	-0.04
Japan	0.38	-0.04	0.60	-0.01	0.77	-0.01	1.31	-0.01	1.98	0.00
N'lands	3.47	0.00	3.75	-0.03	4.08	-0.02	4.56	-0.01	5.09	-0.02
Spain	4.45	-0.05	4.20	-0.05	4.32	-0.03	4.76	-0.03	5.32	-0.05
Sweden	4.16	0.00	4.75	0.01	4.80	0.00	5.36	-0.01	5.67	-0.02
S'land	1.19	-0.01	1.44	-0.01	1.31	0.09	1.99	0.00	2.87	-0.02
UK	6.95	-0.05	7.44	-0.02	6.53	-0.07	6.17	-0.09	6.01	-0.08
US	5.04	0.06	4.99	0.00	5.38	-0.02	5.48	-0.03	5.63	-0.02

Money Market Rates

	Overnight		1 week		1 month		3 months		6 months		1 year	
Treasury Bills					7.10	6.95	7.10	6.95				
LIBOR												
Domestic Depos	7.50	7.63	7.38	7.50	7.41	7.47	7.41	7.47	7.38	7.44	7.34	7.41
Eurosterling Deps	7.44	7.56	7.47	7.53	7.41	7.47	7.41	7.47	7.41	7.47	7.34	7.41
Eligible Bank Bills					7.24	7.18	7.24	7.18	7.20	7.14		
Sterling CDs					7.42	7.36	7.42	7.36	7.40	7.32	7.30	7.22
Eurodollar CDs					5.52		5.52		5.55			
ECU Deposits					4.25	4.38	4.25	4.38	4.28	4.41		

Liffe Financial Futures

Contract		Settlement	High	Low	Est floor volume	Open interest
Long Gilt	Mar-98	123.44	123.47	122.59	82176	175454
German Bund	Mar-98	106.60	106.64	106.24	130377	255006
US Long Bond	Mar-98	119.53	-	-	-	-
Italian Bond	Mar-98	117.64	117.66	117.24	41069	119254
Japan Govt Bd	Mar-98	129.35	129.35	129.19	4092	-
3 Mth Sterling	Mar-98	92.55	92.58	92.51	19580	134833
	Jun-98	92.72	92.74	92.64	49627	129639
3 Mth Euromark	Mar-98	96.43	96.44	96.42	30099	367182
	Jun-98	96.28	96.29	96.27	32209	350189
3 Mth Eurolira	Mar-98	94.12	94.14	94.10	12571	141050
	Jun-98	95.02	95.04	94.98	20107	178611
3 Mth Euryen	Mar-98	99.04	-	-	-	-
3 Mth Euroswiss	Mar-98	98.71	98.75	98.70	6318	68420
	Jun-98	98.59	98.62	98.58	5268	51684
3 Mth ECU	Mar-98	95.56	95.67	95.64	1275	8472
	Mar-98	95.71	95.72	95.68	363	8562
FTSE 100	Mar-98	5638.00	5640.00	5595.00	7642	61976

Liffe FTSE 100 Index Option

Settlement Price: 5613.30

Series	Feb Call	Imp Vol	Put	Imp Vol	Mar Call	Put	Apr Call	Put	May Call	Put
5550	128	24	44	20	209	121	267	165	319	195
5600	93	22	59	18	177	141	236	184	288	215
5650	64	21	78	17	146	160	205	204	257	234
5700	43	20	105	17	120	184	177	227	228	256

Commodity Indices

Goldman Sachs — 5:30pm

	Base date	Last	Chg	%chg	31 Dec	%chgYTD
Index	1970=100	170.92	0.16	0.09	215.26	-20.60
Agricultural	1970=100	230.18	0.31	0.14	231.23	-0.45
Energy	1933=100	59.91	0.02	0.03	85.86	-30.22
Ind Metals	1977=100	152.42	0.18	0.12	168.79	-9.70
Livestock	1970=100	170.03	-0.50	-0.29	191.03	-10.99
Prec Metals	1973=100	411.24	0.75	0.18	463.54	-11.28

Energy

* prices at 5:30pm

Brent Crude($/barrel) IPE	Close	Chg	Vol	Gas oil($/tonne) IPE	Close	Chg	Vol	WTI Crude($/barrel) NYM	Last	Chg	Products($/tonne) Spot CIF NW Eur	
Mar	15.12	-0.13	17530	Feb	138.50	-1.50	5782	Mar	16.48	-0.16	Gasoline 95	168.00
Apr	15.33	-0.10	22065	Mar	140.50	-1.25	5706	Apr	16.71	-0.17	Naphtha	154.00
May	15.56	-0.05	4407	Apr	142.50	-1.00	1094	May	16.91	-0.16	Gasoil	141.00
								Jun	17.14	-0.11	Fuel Oil (3.5%s)	61.00

Industrial Metals

LME ($/tonne)	Cash		Chg	3 month		Chg	LME stocks	Chg
Aluminium HG	1474	1475	-15.50	1493.5	1494.5	-14	572775	-2125
Aluminium Alloy	1310	1315	-3.00	1335.	1338	-2	43400	120
Copper A	1664	1665	1.50	1690	1691	2	370050	-1625
Lead	516	517	-3.50	528	529	-3	108100	-150
Nickel	5500	5510	-10.00	5595	5600	-10	66468	60
Tin	5215	5225	-40.00	5250	5255	-35	11270	-115
Zinc	1068	1069	5.50	1093	1094	5	485050	-2150

Precious Metals

pm fix/$ per oz		Day's chg	Year's chg	pm fix/£ per oz		Day's chg	Year's chg	Coins ($)	Day's trade	Yr's chg
Platinum	389.50	-6.50	37.00	Platinum	239.60	-2.75	23.55	Krugrands	298.15	-42.15
Palladium	234.00	-2.00	93.75	Palladium	143.95	-0.50	61.55	Sovs	70.05	
Silver	7.14	-0.06	2.22	Silver	4.40	0.00	1.39	Nobles	378.05	
Gold	300.60	1.50	-39.80					Maple Leaf	312.16	-40.89

Agricultural

* at 5:30pm

Cocoa		Coffee		Barley		Potatoes		Lge Potatoes	
LIFFE	£/tonne	LIFFE	$/tonne	LIFFE	£/tonne	LIFFE	£/tonne	ATA	$/25k kg
Mar98	999.00	Mar98	1722.00	Mar98	75.75	Mar98	70.00	Apr98	689.50
May98	1024.00	May98	1695.00	May98	78.00	Apr98	74.00	May98	693.50
Jul98	1049.00	Jul98	1678.00	Sep98	78.25	May98	87.00	Jun98	699.00
Vol	5846	Vol	7055	Vol	0	Vol	6	Vol	31113
White Sugar*		Freight		Wheat		Corn*		Soya Beans*	
LIFFE	$/tonne	LIFFE	$10/pt	LIFFE	£/tonne	CBOT	Cents/bshl	CBOT	$/5k bshls
Mar98	286.50	Feb98	945.00	Mar98	81.50	Mar98	272.00	Mar98	27.80
May98	291.00	Apr98	1125.00	May98	83.25	May98	281.25	May98	28.50
Aug98	296.00	Jul98	1005.00	Jul98	85.20	Jul98	286.75	Jul98	32.20
Vol	6774	Vol	34	Vol	315	Vol	32969	Vol	259

100 Largest Insurance Funds

Fund	Bid	Offer	Fund	Bid	Offer
AXA E&L Balanced	1024.80	1078.80	Lincoln (Laur T) Mngd 3 Acc	732.80	771.30
AXA E&L Distribution	117.60	123.80	London & Manchester Flex Acc	764.00	804.00
AXA E&L Higher Inc	1700.30	1789.80	London Life Equity	1407.20	1407.20
AXA E&L UK Equity	1693.10	1777.00	London Life Mixed	835.30	835.30
Abbey Equity Ser 4	331.90	349.40	M & G Managed Bond Acc	1181.40	1240.60
Abbey International Ser 4	229.80	241.70	M & G Recovery Bond Acc	1125.80	1182.20
Abbey Managed Ser 4	897.00	944.30	Merchant Investors Managed	650.40	684.60
Abbey National Managed	169.30	178.20	Midland Balanced	118.60	124.80
Abbey National UK Equity	193.40	203.60	Midland UK Equity	155.80	164.00
Albany Equity Acc Ser 3	2337.00	2460.00	NPI Managed	667.50	723.60
Albany Mult Invest Acc Ser 3	1406.20	1480.20	NatWest Growth Managed	158.90	168.90
Allied Dunbar Distrib Bond	29.00	30.60	NatWest Security Managed	143.10	150.50
Allied Dunbar Equity Acc	2582.30	2709.90	NatWest UK Equity	188.90	198.40
Allied Dunbar Gen'l Hi Inc S 2	51.40	54.20	Norwich Managed Ser-NUAM	2120.70	2232.30
Allied Dunbar Managed Acc	1552.80	1634.50	Norwich Unitised Managed	202.81	213.27
Allied Dunbar Property Acc	756.80	796.70	Norwich Unitised w/Profits	176.97	186.39
Barclays Equity Acc	1398.80	1473.50	Pearl Equity Net	438.30	461.40
Barclays Internat'l Acc	507.80	534.80	Pearl Managed Net	363.50	382.70
Barclays Managed Acc	761.70	801.80	Prudential E Mgd Ser 2	1132.70	1192.40
Black Horse Income Ser 2	1178.78	1240.83	Prudential Profund Mgd	498.80	527.30
Black Horse Mgd Inv Ser 2	674.73	710.25	Royal Managed	547.70	576.50
CU Managed	571.20	601.20	Royal Scottish Growth	237.80	250.40
CU UK Equity	787.50	829.00	Royal Scottish UK Equity	281.00	296.80
CU With Profs	147.70	154.50	Scot Amicable Eq Ser 1	1125.80	1185.10
Canlife Managed Ser 1/2	992.70	1044.90	Scot Amicable Mngd Ser 1	634.70	668.20
Cler Med Fd Equity	593.40	640.50	Scot Equitable Mixed	371.50	391.00
Cler Med Fd Sapphire	408.20	427.60	Scot Life Managed	412.20	431.80
Cler Med With Profits	112.20	117.20	Scot Mutual Safety	314.00	329.90
Confederation Equity Ser 1	2738.40	2880.40	Scot Providers Inst Blue Chip	259.30	273.10
Eagle Star Managed Ser 2	223.60	235.40	Scot Provident Inst With Prof	143.90	151.50
Family Performance	182.00	192.00	Scot Widows International	591.80	622.90
Friends Prov Managed	444.40	467.80	Scot Widows Mixed	838.90	872.80
Friends Prov UK Equity	645.80	679.80	Standard Equity	1688.30	1772.20
Friends Prov With Profits	224.20	236.00	Standard European	235.60	248.00
GA Prov Mutual Equity	1172.80	1234.50	Standard Far East	142.20	155.50
GA Prov Mutual Managed	676.80	712.50	Standard Life Fixed Interest	514.60	541.70
GA Unitised With Profits	171.80	182.20	Standard Managed	1008.80	1061.90
Gan Managed	400.60	421.80	Sun Alliance Equity	1528.30	1608.40
Guardian LLA Equity Acc	1573.80	1656.40	Sun Alliance Managed	1057.30	1112.80
Guardian LLA Int'l Acc	807.80	850.30	Sun Life Def Distrib Acc	245.20	258.20
Guardian LLA Managed Acc	938.10	987.40	Sun Life Distrib Acc	357.90	376.80
Hill Samuel Equity	939.40	992.40	Sun Life Equity Acc	2323.90	2442.80
Hill Samuel Managed Ser A	783.00	827.70	Sun Life Managed Acc	1255.80	1321.90
Irish Life Global Mgd Ser 3	815.00	854.30	Sun Life/Canada Century Eq	195.20	185.20
J Rothschild Nat Managed	214.00	222.60	Sun Life/Canada Century Mgd	172.80	172.80
Legal & General Eq Acc Ser2	1872.20	1970.80	Sun Life/Canada Equity Acc	858.20	903.40
Legal & General Int'l Ac Ser2	669.30	704.60	Sun Life/Canada Mgd Acc	559.80	589.20
Legal & General Managed Acc	1170.70	1232.40	TSB Equity	551.10	580.20
Lincoln (Laur T) Mngd Acc	324.30	339.80	TSB Homebuyers	316.10	336.00
Lincoln (Laur T) UK Eq Acc	718.00	753.60	TSB Managed	404.80	426.00

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Suny Bay heads the National assembly

Rough Quest, the 1996 Aintree hero, is back on track to attempt another victory in the race. *Richard Edmondson* reports.

In the salubrious setting of The Dorchester in Park Lane yesterday, weights were allotted to the enormous number of entries for the Grand National. The great congregation of spectators for the race itself on 4 April, however, will be gaining access to a somewhat scruffier Aintree.

Racegoers will pass through an airport-style archway and subject themselves to body-searches (all promising ante-post vouchers will probably be confiscated). The expected 6,000 cars that trundle to the course will have to be prebooked and all will also be subjected to scanning with machinery that the police tell us hi-tech (apparently it's better than that old stuff they used to use).

The topweight this year is likely to be Suny Bay, if the Hennessy Gold Cup winner recovers from the malaise currently ailing him and his confederates at Uplands. The grey has pulled a muscle in his hind quarters, but is expected to start cantering next week.

His options include the Greenalls Gold Cup at Haydock (which he won 12 months ago), the Gold Cup and the National. "We'd be very unlucky if things were bad enough that we could not run in two of those those three races," Brooks said.

If last year's runner-up does manage to incorporate Newton-le-Willows into his programme he may meet Belmont King, Paul Nicholls's Scottish Grand National winner. It is something of a shame that the Somerset trainer has not entered another of his equine staff, Ottowa, who would have been a great selection for your Canadian on the day, but the trainer nevertheless has four entries.

Nicholls is a man worth considering as the National encapsulates his sole interest among animals in training. He has prepared more steeplechase winners than anyone this campaign.

RICHARD EDMONDSON
NAP: Pealings
(Ascot 1.30)
NB: One Man
(Ascot 3.05)

"Belmont King is our main hope," Nicholls said. "He has been trained solely for the race and will run in the Greenalls and then the National. He was in the process of running his best for race for us when he fell in the Hennessy. You can ignore his run in the Welsh National as he came back coughing."

Nicholls, it appears, will also provide the Tricast combinations. "I was very pleased with Court Melody's run at Sandown on Saturday. He was second over the National fences in the Becher Chase earlier in the season. General Crack could go well if the ground was fast."

Of Rough Quest, one of the favourites, trainer Terry Casey said: "He'll go straight to the Gold Cup first and though that might be a bit beyond him at his age now, he will run a lot better than he's been running. He's at his best in the Spring.

"I rode him on Sunday morning and he felt super. Before I left him today he looked fantastic, in fact he's never looked better."

Gordon Richards has nine horses in the contest yet could not bring himself to savour the warm smoked-haddock and asparagus tart yesterday at the sumptuous weights lunch. Cup-a-soup serves a better purpose in the frozen north.

The Boss has yet to tell us what the Greystoke squad will be. "It's very difficult to say at this stage with Cheltenham still to come," Richards said. "I want to get Addington Boy, and The Grey Monk, to the Gold Cup.

"But if a week beforehand I thought The Grey Monk wasn't quite right and if he had cut in the ground in the National he could be the one. He's had a very light time and he would relish the trip. A lot depends on the ground. "McGregor The Third might take his chance if the ground was fast. Buckboard Bounce was fourth last year and he could be the one but he disappointed me last time out."

Nigel Twiston-Davies was pleased by Young Hustler's light weight, though the old horse is hardly living up to his name these days. He is in a more fighting mood about his other runner, Earth Summit. "They've both got fair weights," he said. "Young Hustler is usually among the topweights. Earth Summit is in good nick and will run in the Greenalls before going for the National."

Martin Pipe described Cyborgo and Challenger Du Luc as his "two serious ones" among nine entries from his stable, but both head to the Gold Cup first. "It could be just Challenger's sort of race," Pipe said.

Oliver Sherwood said: "Him Of Praise has had only nine runs under Rules and is very inexperienced. But he might never have a weight like that again."

Grand National Handicap Chase (4m 4f)				
Horse (Trainer/Age&weight)	Coral	William Hill	Ladbrokes	Tote
Suny Bay (C Brooks/9yo12st)	14-1	16-1	16-1	16-1
The Grey Monk (G Richards/10yo11st6lb)	33-1	25-1	25-1	25-1
Couldnt Be Better (C Brooks/11yo11st7lb)	50-1	40-1	40-1	40-1
Cyborgo (M Pipe/8yo11st7lb)	16-1	20-1	16-1	20-1
Senor El Betrutti (M Pipe/9yo11st5lb)	33-1	33-1	40-1	25-1
Addington Boy (G Richards/10yo11st5lb)	25-1	25-1	25-1	20-1
Coome Hill (W Dennis/9yo11st5lb)	Doubtful	Doubtful	Doubtful	Doubtful
Rough Quest (T Casey/12yo11st4lb)	16-1	20-1	14-1	14-1
Challenger Du Luc (M Pipe/8yo11st3lb)	25-1	25-1	25-1	25-1
Belmont King (P Nicholls/10yo11st2lb)	33-1	20-1	25-1	20-1
Buck Jakes (T Forster/10yo10st12lb)	50-1	50-1	50-1	Doubtful
General Wolfe (T Forster/9yo10st8lb)	20-1	16-1	16-1	16-1
Scotton Banks (T Easterby/9yo10st7lb)	50-1	66-1	66-1	50-1
Banjo (D Nicholson/8yo10st7lb)	80-1	33-1	33-1	33-1
Earth Summit (N Twiston-Davies/10yo10st5lb)	25-1	20-1	20-1	20-1
Bells Life (P Hobbs/9yo10st5lb)	40-1	25-1	33-1	33-1
Avro Anson (Miss J Camacho/10yo10st3lb)	25-1	25-1	33-1	20-1
Mudahim (Mrs J Pitman/12yo10st3lb)	25-1	25-1	25-1	25-1
Nahthen Lad (Mrs J Pitman/9yo10st3lb)	33-1	25-1	25-1	20-1
General Command (M Todhunter/10yo10st3lb)	25-1	33-1	40-1	33-1
Fantus (R Barber/11yo10st3lb)	33-1	33-1	40-1	33-1
Young Hustler (N Twiston-Davies/11yo10st2lb)	40-1	33-1	50-1	33-1
Egypt Mill Prince (Mrs J Pitman/12yo10st2lb)	33-1	50-1	66-1	66-1
Buckboard Bounce (G Richards/12yo10st1lb)	66-1	33-1	40-1	33-1
Wylde Hide (A L T Moore(Irl)/11yo10st)	25-1	25-1	25-1	33-1
Dun Belle (P Fahy(Irl)/9yo9st12lb)	33-1	33-1	25-1	33-1
Tartan Tyrant (G Richards/12yo9st12lb)	66-1	50-1	66-1	40-1
General Crack (P Nicholls/9yo9st12lb)	66-1	50-1	66-1	40-1
McGregor The Third (G Richards/12yo9st11lb)	33-1	40-1	33-1	40-1
Antrak Express (Mrs J Pitman/11yo9st10lb)	40-1	50-1	100-1	66-1
Go Universal (N Chance/10yo9st10lb)	66-1	66-1	50-1	50-1
Time For A Run (E O'Grady(Irl)/11yo9st10lb)	20-1	16-1	20-1	16-1
Ciel De Brion (F Doumen(Fr)/8yo9st10lb)	33-1	25-1	33-1	25-1
Court Melody (P Nicholls/10yo9st10lb)	33-1	33-1	33-1	33-1
Antonin (Mrs S Bramall(Irl)/10yo9st9lb)	40-1	40-1	50-1	50-1
Son Of War (P McCreery(Irl)/11yo9st9lb)	50-1	66-1	50-1	50-1
Celtic Abbey (Miss V Williams/10yo9st9lb)	40-1	35-1	33-1	33-1
Superior Finish (M Pitman/12yo9st9lb)	40-1	40-1	40-1	40-1
Him Of Praise (O Sherwood/8yo9st7lb)	25-1	25-1	20-1	33-1
River Mandate (T Forster/11yo9st7lb)	33-1	33-1	40-1	33-1
Another Excuse (E O'Sullivan(Irl)/10yo9st7lb)	66-1	100-1	50-1	50-1
Into The Red (Mrs M Reveley/14yo9st7lb)	100-1	66-1	66-1	66-1
Commercial Artist (D McCain/12yo9st7lb)	100-1	100-1	100-1	100-1
Tartan Tradewinds (G Richards/11yo9st7lb)	50-1	50-1	100-1	50-1
Glemot (P Webber/10yo9st5lb)	66-1	66-1	50-1	66-1
What A Hand (P Nicholls/10yo9st5lb)	50-1	50-1	66-1	33-1
St Mellion Fairway (9yo9st5lb)	40-1	50-1	33-1	40-1
Samlee (P Hobbs/9yo9st4lb)	25-1	33-1	25-1	40-1
Go Go Gallant (F Sutherland(Irl)/8yo9st4lb)	66-1	40-1	40-1	100-1
Kerry Orchid (E O'Grady(Irl)/10yo9st4lb)	50-1	66-1	50-1	66-1
Destin D'Estruval (D Nicholson/7yo9st3lb)	50-1	50-1	66-1	50-1
Colonel In Chief (G Richards/8yo9st3lb)	66-1	33-1	50-1	50-1
Garnwin (N Henderson/8yo9st3lb)	66-1	40-1	66-1	66-1
Gimme Five (E O'Grady(Irl)/11yo9st3lb)	33-1	50-1	50-1	66-1
River Lossie (C Egerton/9yo9st2lb)	66-1	100-1	100-1	100-1
Greenhill Tare Away (P Hobbs/10yo9st1lb)	66-1	66-1	66-1	100-1
Sir Peter Lely (M Hammond/11yo9st1lb)	50-1	40-1	66-1	66-1
Stormtracker (C Weedon/9yo9st)	33-1	40-1	50-1	66-1
Cariboo Gold (K Bailey/9yo9st)	66-1	50-1	66-1	66-1
Linden's Lotto (G Richards/9yo9st)	40-1	40-1	40-1	50-1
Miracle Man (C Weedon/10yo8st13lb)	40-1	66-1	100-1	66-1
Turning Trix (D Nicholson/11yo8st13lb)	50-1	66-1	66-1	50-1
Christmas Gorse (N Gaselee/12yo8st11lb)	66-1	66-1	100-1	100-1
Yeoman Warrior (R Rowe/11yo8st11lb)	50-1	66-1	150-1	66-1
Parsons Boy (G Richards/9yo8st11lb)	50-1	100-1	66-1	66-1
Danger Baby (P Bowen/8yo8st11lb)	100-1	100-1	100-1	100-1
Evangelica (M Pipe/8yo8st11lb)	100-1	100-1	66-1	66-1
Kadi (D Nicholson/9yo8st10lb)	50-1	50-1	50-1	66-1
Pond House (M Pipe/9yo8st9lb)	100-1	66-1	100-1	150-1
Brave Highlander (J Gifford/10yo8st8lb)	50-1	50-1	66-1	66-1
Hillwalk (R Curtis/12yo8st8lb)	150-1	100-1	66-1	150-1
Pancho's Tango (F Sutherland(Irl)/9yo8st8lb)	100-1	100-1	66-1	100-1
Joe White (J H Johnson/12yo8st8lb)	100-1	66-1	66-1	200-1
Diwali Dancer (M Pipe/8yo8st7lb)	100-1	100-1	66-1	66-1
Una's Choice (F Flood(Irl)/10yo8st6lb)	50-1	66-1	50-1	100-1
Jurassic Classic (Mrs L Richards/11yo8st6lb)	150-1	100-1	150-1	150-1
Killeshin (H Manners/12yo8st6lb)	40-1	100-1	66-1	66-1
Valiant Warrior (M Hammond/10yo8st6lb)	66-1	40-1	66-1	100-1
Do Rightly (M Bradstock/9yo8st6lb)	100-1	100-1	200-1	200-1
Irish Stamp (F Murphy/9yo8st6lb)	66-1	66-1	66-1	100-1
Indian Arrow (M Pipe/10yo8st5lb)	40-1	50-1	50-1	100-1
Fabricator (P Finn(Irl)/12yo8st4lb)	100-1	100-1	200-1	150-1
Pashto (N Henderson/11yo8st4lb)	100-1	100-1	100-1	200-1
Back Bar (A L T Moore(Irl)/10yo8st3lb)	150-1	100-1	100-1	100-1
Kendal Cavalier (B R Millman/8yo8st3lb)	33-1	50-1	50-1	33-1
Andre Laval (K Bailey/9yo8st2lb)	100-1	100-1	200-1	150-1
Equity Player (R Curtis/13yo8st1lb)	150-1	100-1	200-1	200-1
Monticoot (S Mellor/9yo8st1lb)	100-1	500-1	150-1	150-1
Druid's Brook (K Bailey/8yo8st)	100-1	100-1	100-1	150-1
Radical Choice (J Charlton/9yo8st)	66-1	150-1	100-1	150-1
Damas (M Pipe/7yo8st)	100-1	150-1	100-1	250-1
Choisty (H E Haynes/8yo7st13lb)	150-1	100-1	100-1	200-1
Griffins Bar (Mrs P Sly/10yo7st12lb)	150-1	100-1	200-1	250-1
Thermal Warrior (J Old/10yo7st11lb)	66-1	100-1	100-1	100-1
Sideofthill (J J O'Neill/9yo7st11lb)	100-1	150-1	66-1	100-1
Winter Belle (J H Johnson/10yo7st10lb)	100-1	100-1	200-1	150-1
Maple Dancer (D Williams/12yo7st10lb)	250-1	200-1	250-1	300-1
Top Javalin (N Hawke/11yo7st10lb)	100-1	150-1	100-1	200-1
Jolivar (M Pipe/10yo7st10lb)	100-1	100-1	500-1	200-1
Mirella Express (J H Johnson/9yo7st10lb)	150-1	200-1	200-1	300-1
Decyborg (M Pipe/7yo7st10lb)	150-1	150-1	100-1	300-1
Wayuphill (C Parker/11yo7st10lb)	100-1	200-1	200-1	250-1

Only 40 can run. Minimum weight: 10st. Each-way a quarter the odds, places 1, 2, 3, 4 (Aintree, Saturday, 4 April)

HYPERION'S TV TIPS

ASCOT

2.30: WARNER FOR PLAYERS, who ran a tremendous race on his reappearance to be four lengths third to Splendid Thyne in a 30-runner 2m 4f 110yds handicap hurdle at Warwick, stays well and looks the pick of the weights. Gysart may pose most problems
❑❑❑

3.05: SENOR EL BETRUTTI hated the soft ground when pulled up in the King George VI Chase at Kempton on Boxing Day, but had previously jumped brilliantly when winning both the Murphy's Gold Cup and the Tripleprint Gold Cup at Cheltenham. He has ground conditions in his favour today. He is preferred to One Man, who also ran badly in the King George and often loses his form around now and Strong Promise, who returns after a lengthy lay-off.
❑❑❑

3.35: FIDDLING THE FACTS, a tough mare who particularly impressed with her battling victory over 3m at Kempton in December, will be hard to beat. The Toiseach is the danger.

FIRST SHOW

Ascot — 3.35				
Horse	C	H	L	T
Fiddling The Facts	6-4	13-8	11-8	6-4
Strong Chairman	10-3	7-2	7-2	3-1
The Toiseach	7-2	10-3	3-1	4-1
Kilmington	6-1	8-1	7-1	7-1
Act Of Faith	8-1	13-2	9-1	7-1
Mahler	16-1	16-1	16-1	16-1

Each way, a fifth the odds, places 1, 2
C - Coral, H - William Hill, L - Ladbrokes, T - Tote

Fallon accused of lying

Kieren Fallon was yesterday accused of "lying" after Top Cees finished fifth at Newmarket three years ago. Fallon, Lynda and Jack Ramsden are suing *The Sporting Life* for libel over an article in May 1995 which accused them of "cheating" their way to victory in the Chester Cup on Top Cees.

The newspaper's barrister accused Fallon of "deliberately lying" to the stewards' inquiry held after the Swaffham Handicap over the jockey's claim that he had never previously ridden the horse. The jockey vehemently denied the accusation. The hearing continues today.

ASCOT

HYPERION
1.30 Blaze Of Song
2.00 Classy Lad
2.30 Warner For Players
3.05 Senor El Betrutti
3.35 Fiddling The Facts (nb)
4.05 GREY SHOT (nap)
4.35 *Indian Spring*

GOING: Good (Good to Firm in places).
●*Right-hand course with testing uphill finish.*
●Course near junction of A329 and A330. Access from M3 (Junc 3) and M4 (Junc 6). Helicopter-landing facility at course (Heathrow 15m). Railway station (service from London, Waterloo) adjoins course. **ADMISSION:** Members £15 (*Junior Members 16-25 years, half price*); Grandstand & Paddock £10; Silver Ring £5. **CAR PARK:** No's 1, 2 & 3 £4, rest free.
●**LEADING TRAINERS:** D Nicholson 18-76 (23.7%), N Twiston-Davies 15-93 (16.1%), M Pipe 13-63 (20.6%), N Henderson 13-91 (14.3%), J Gifford 12-101 (11.9%).
●**LEADING JOCKEYS:** A P McCoy 24-93 (25.8%), R Dunwoody 23-120 (19.2%), *M A Fitzgerald* 18-123 (14.6%), N Williamson 10-53 (18.9%), C Llewellyn 10-72 (13.9%).
●**FAVOURITES:** 132-347 (38%).
BLINKERED FIRST TIME: Pleasure Shared (2.30).

1.30 KILFANE CONDITIONAL JOCKEYS HANDICAP HURDLE (CLASS E) £5,000 added 2m 4f Penalty Value £3,680

1 -4304U DEYMIAR (18) (D) (T J Whitley) D Gandolfo 6 11 10 ......Sophie Mitchell
2 /F3P52 EVER SMILE (FR) (55) (D) (David L'Estrange) M Pipe 11 11 8 ......G Supple B
3 P/400- URON V (FR) (337) (D) (Mrs E M Bousquet-Payne) Mrs M Jones 12 11 8 ......S Hearn (5)
4 -1U55 PEALINGS (46) (D) (G A Hubbard) G Hubbard 6 10 13 ......L Cummins
5 P2140 AINSI SOIT IL (FR) (28) (D) (A-Men Partnership) G McCourt 7 10 11 ......R Studholme
6 240446 SHAHRANI (84) (D) (A S Helaissi and Mr S Helaissi) M Pipe 6 10 11 ......C Durham (7)
7 214532 D'NAAN (6) (Mrs P B Browne) M Pipe 5 10 5 ......J Hust (7) B
8 004P5 DAMIER BLANC (FR) (42) (D) (Trevor Painting) M Pipe 9 10 4 ......E Callaghan B
9 4036 PROCEED (25) (G T Redmore) J Gifford 6 10 1 ......O Burrows
10 -U423 MILLMOUNT (26) (Tommy Breen) T McGovern 8 10 1 ......R Thornton B
11 5334U3 BLAZE OF SONG (11) (D Boocock) D Wintle 8 10 0 ......R Massey
12 12-456 MUSEUM (57) (R D Barber & R J B Blake) P Winkworth 7 10 0 ......C McCormack
13 -40UP6 SMUGGLER'S POINT (USA) (12) (D) (Mrs V R Hoare) J Bridger 8 10 0 ......M Batchelor (3) B
14 6031/P PA D'OR (USA) (58) (Scott Tester Partnership) G Balding 8 10 0 ......F Kenny (5)
15 30P4-0 ZIP YOUR LIP (41) (Paul Townsley) Mrs P Townsley 8 10 0 ......X Aizpuru
16 -103F2 SAAFI (20) (D) (H J W Davies) R Baker 7 10 0 ......D Salter B
– 16 declared –

Minimum weight: 10st. True handicap weights: Museum 9st 9lb, Smuggler's Point 9st 7lb, Pa D'Or 9st 6lb, Zip Your Lip 9st 5lb, Saafi 9st.
BETTING: 4-1 Millmount, 9-2 Pealings, 6-1 Proceed, 13-2 Ever Smile, 8-1 Blaze Of Song, 10-1 Ainsi Soit Il, D'Naan, Deymiar, 16-1 Damier Blanc, Uron V, Museum, Saafi, 20-1 Shahrani, Smuggler's Point, 25-1 others
1997: Flying Fiddler 6 10 2 P Henley 16-1 (M J Roberts) 10 ran

FORM GUIDE
PEALINGS looked smart in landing two Huntingdon novice hurdles on fast ground in October and his three defeats since have been with cut underfoot. Having beaten Chabrol a length and a half on his second start, he went down by 13 lengths in third to the same opponent in a valuable Uttoxeter race when meeting him on much more favourable terms. He has since been well beaten in handicaps at Warwick and Kempton, for which he has dropped 5lb. Martin Pipe runs four and the pick looks to be Ever Smile, who ran his best race of the season when blinkered for the first time at Towcester, finishing three lengths second to Native Field in a claiming hurdle. D'Naan is also running well and will appreciate the better going, but he is not an easy ride, while Pipe's other runners, Shahrani and Damier Blanc, make little appeal. Millmount has twice run well on soft ground since his Folkestone win, last time in third of 15 to Tompetoo at Kempton. Ainsi Soit Il has twice disappointed since winning at Towcester and Folkestone in December, but he has the clear beating of Blaze Of Song and Museum if on song. **Selection: PEALINGS**

2.00 CRISPIN NOVICE CHASE (CLASS B) £15,000 added 2m Penalty Value £10,211

1 P-11F3 ASHWELL BOY (87) (CD) (A B S Racing) P Hobbs 7 11 4 ......R Dunwoody
2 52-F1 CLASSY LAD (NZ) (12) (D) (Michael Buckley) N Henderson 8 11 4 ......M A Fitzgerald
3 0-5342 THE LAND AGENT (16) (D I Bare) J Mullins 7 11 4 ......N Williamson
4 61131 CHAMPLEVE (FR) (5) (D) (D A Johnson) M Pipe 5 10 9 ......A P McCoy
– 4 declared –

BETTING: 11-8 Champleve, 2-1 Classy Lad, 3-1 Ashwell Boy, 10-1 The Land Agent
1997: Amancio 6 11 4 R Dunwoody 11-10 (Mrs A Perrett) 2 ran

FORM GUIDE
Champleve could go in again having impressed when landing the odds on his chasing debut over this trip at Lingfield on Friday, but it remains to be seen how he handles today's faster surface. **CLASSY LAD** fell on his chasing debut at Doncaster in December but made amends there last month, coming home 14 lengths clear of the consistent Eirespray. Nicky Henderson's runner is open to further improvement and clearly handles fast ground well. **Ashwell Boy** has had a 12-week break since finishing tailed off behind Queen Of Spades at Cheltenham. His Newton Abbot win from Northern Starlight (stablemate to Champleve and successful four times since) on fast going in October entitles him to plenty of respect, but he is hardly consistent. **The Land Agent** ran creditably to be beaten four lengths by Kadastrof (gave 8lb) at Kempton last time, but he was no match for Champleve over hurdles at Chepstow in December. **Selection: CLASSY LAD**

2.30 SHENLEY ENTERPRISES HANDICAP HURDLE (CLASS B) £12,000 added 3m Penalty Value £8,013 BBC2

1 F-P4P0 PLEASURE SHARED (25) (CD) (Tony Eaves) P Hobbs 10 11 10 ......R Dunwoody B
2 0-1112 GYSART (19) (D) (Mrs R Cobbold) M Pipe 9 11 3 ......A P McCoy B
3 1/52F- TREASURE AGAIN (424) (CD) (John Hugo Gwynne) Mrs M Jones 9 10 11 ......D Bridgwater
4 5451-3 WARNER FOR PLAYERS (25) (Terry Warner) P Hobbs 7 10 3 ......N Williamson
5 -P2P54 BELL STAFFBOY (11) (D) (K W Bell & Son Ltd) J O'Shea 9 10 0 ......T J Murphy V
6 21-5/1 THREE FARTHINGS (18) (Exors of the Late K R Britten) J Old 8 10 0 ......C Llewellyn
– 6 declared –

Minimum weight: 10st. True handicap weights: Bell Staffboy 9st 12lb, Three Farthings 9st 7lb.
BETTING: 5-4 Gysart, 7-2 Three Farthings, 9-2 Warner For Players, 11-2 Bell Staffboy, 10-1 Pleasure Shared, Treasure Again
1997: Hale Deming 7 10 7 T Jenks 9-4 fav (N Twiston-Davies) 5 ran

FORM GUIDE
GYSART failed by eight lengths to concede 24lb to Tompetoo over course and distance last time and has gone up by another 3lb since, but he is still fancied to get back in the winner's enclosure. **Pleasure Shared** has shown little this season and was pulled up behind Paddy's Return in the Long Walk Hurdle here last time. First-time blinkers could help him, though, and he would have a leading chance if able to reproduce the form he showed in the spring of 1996 to win at Aintree (Grade One novice hurdle) and beat Seekin Cash in the Letheby & Christopher Long Distance Hurdle here. **Treasure Again** has not run since unseating over fences at Lingfield 14 months ago but returns on a good mark and won over the course and distance two years ago off just a 4lb lower mark. **Warner For Players** was 26lb out of the handicap when a close third to Splendid Thyne at Warwick last month and has been reassessed accordingly. He would want softer going. So would in-form **Three Farthings**, who is 7lb out of the handicap and 11lb higher than when beating Toby Brown half a length at Kempton last time. **Bell Staffboy** gave encouragement in fourth to Lets Be Frank at Doncaster (2m 4f) and will be suited by the longer distance. *He can go well.* **Selection: GYSART**

3.05 COMET AND SONY CHASE (Grade 1) (CLASS A) £60,000 added 2m 3f 110yds Penalty Value £37,104 BBC2

1 6P-15 ONE MAN (47) (C) (D) (BF) (J Hales) G Richards 10 11 7 ......A Dobbin
2 -F21P SENOR EL BETRUTTI (47) (CD) (Gerard Nock) Mrs S Nock 9 11 7 ......G Bradley
3 4152/1- STRONG PROMISE (302) (CD) (G A Hubbard) G Hubbard 7 11 7 ......N Williamson
– 3 declared –

BETTING: 5-5 Strong Promise, 8-4 One Man, 4-1 Senor El Betrutti
1997: Strong Promise 6 11 7 N Williamson 10-1 (G Hubbard) 4 ran

FORM GUIDE
STRONG PROMISE *outbattled* **One Man** up the straight in this race last year and can repeat the dose. True, he has not had a recent run, but the poor showing of One Man and Senor El Betrutti in the King George means he is hardly at a disadvantage. One Man made much of the running in last year's race and may be suited by being able to follow likely leader Senor El Betrutti now, but Strong Promise is top class at this sort of trip and should be good enough. Today's faster ground should suit Senor El Betrutti, but he still has a bit to prove at this level. **Selection: STRONG PROMISE**

3.35 HSBC JAMES CAPEL REYNOLDSTOWN NOVICE CHASE (Grade 2) (CLASS A) £30,000 added 3m 110yds Penalty Value £18,840 BBC2

1 1-4P15 MAHLER (27) (English Badminton Partnership) N Twiston-Davies 8 11 9 ......C Llewellyn
2 111-21 STRONG CHAIRMAN (75) (D) (Hunt & Co) P Nicholls 7 11 9 ......T J Murphy
3 231-11 FIDDLING THE FACTS (47) (D) (Mrs E Roberts) N Henderson 7 11 7 ......M A Fitzgerald
4 1/4-32 ACT OF FAITH (25) (C) (D) (Mrs R W S Baker) N Gaselee 8 11 5 ......N Williamson
5 51-1F1 KILMINGTON (23) (D) (H T Pelham) J Gifford 9 11 5 ......A P McCoy
6 2-1131 THE TOISEACH (12) (D) (T & J Vestey) J Fanshawe 7 11 5 ......A Dobbin V
– 6 declared –

BETTING: 6-4 Fiddling The Facts, 11-4 Strong Chairman, 9-2 The Toiseach, 7-1 Act Of Faith, 8-1 Kilmington, 16-1 Mahler
1997: Djeddah 6 11 12 A Kondrat 13-8 fav (F Doumen(FR)) 5 ran

FORM GUIDE
Ottowa's win at Uttoxeter on Saturday has provides a boost to **FIDDLING THE FACTS**, who beat that rival three and a half lengths at Lingfield and then had him 12 lengths behind in third when following up at Kempton on Boxing Day, scoring by six lengths from Forest Ivory. **Strong Chairman** was a prolific winner in point-to-points last season and, after going down by a length to Yahm at Cheltenham on his debut over regulation fences (Kilmington seemingly beaten when unseating four out), beat that rival 13 lengths at Newbury two weeks later. He goes really well on a fast surface. **The Toiseach** ran out a clear-cut winner under top weight in a novice handicap at Doncaster last time but faces a much stiffer task now. **Mahler** looks well out of his depth with a penalty, while softer ground and probably a longer trip would help **Act Of Faith**. **Selection: FIDDLING THE FACTS**

4.05 FERNBANK NOVICE HURDLE (CLASS D) £5,000 added 2m 110yds Penalty Value £3,564

1 /10-11 DAWN LEADER (21) (D) (Bonusprint) J Old 7 11 7 ......C Llewellyn
2 12 GREY SHOT (32) (D) (BF) (J C Smith) I Balding 6 11 7 ......R Dunwoody
3 33 ALMOND ROCK (15) (C I T Racing Ltd) J Fanshawe 6 11 4 ......A Dobbin
4 BENATOM (USA) (F197) (T F Harris) D Elsworth 5 11 4 ......P Holley
5 3 GENERAL ASSEMBLY (18) (The Craftsmen) G Margarson 6 11 4 ......D Bridgwater
6 3 KING KATO (64) (Mrs Jenny Ells) Mrs A Perrett 5 11 4 ......M A Fitzgerald
7 0 TISSUE OF LIES (USA) (26) (The No Hassle Partnership) J Akehurst 5 11 4 ......G Bradley
8 32 WURLITZER (USA) (16) (BF) (William Nott) Mrs J Cecil 6 11 4 ......N Williamson
9 PF ALPA'S HONOR (FR) (16) (Mrs L C Taylor) Mrs L Taylor 6 10 13 ......R Supple
– 9 declared –

BETTING: 8-11 Grey Shot, 4-1 Dawn Leader, 6-1 Benatom, 7-1 King Kato, 14-1 Almond Rock, 16-1 Wurlitzer, 25-1 General Assembly, 33-1 others
1997: Courabi 5 11 7 C F Swan 6-1 (M Pipe) 10 ran

FORM GUIDE
GREY SHOT's Champion Hurdle hopes took a knock when he was no match for French Holly on soft ground at Sandown in the Tolworth Hurdle, but this former top-class Flat stayer remains a smart prospect. Fast ground will suit him. **Dawn Leader** has looked good winning his novice hurdles at Cheltenham and Huntingdon this season, but he faces a much bigger test and the form of those races has not worked out. **Benatom** was rated 12lb lower than Grey Shot on the Flat, but won a valuable Listed rated stakes at York in July before finishing third to Media Star at Goodwood later that month. **King Kato** ran an encouraging first race over hurdles to be third of 21 to Road Racer at Huntingdon and will improve. **Selection: GREY SHOT**

4.35 ASCOT STANDARD OPEN NH FLAT RACE (CLASS H) £3,000 added 2m 110yds Penalty Value £2,453

1 1 INDIAN SPRING (18) (D) (Joe & Joanna Richards) M Pipe 5 11 6 ......A P McCoy
2 BOSUNS MATE (Alan Parker) N Twiston-Davies 5 11 4 ......C Llewellyn
3 *CLEAR SKIES* (Mrs R W S Baker) N Gaselee 5 11 4 ......N Williamson
4 HUNTING MONARCH (P A Deal) G Thorner 5 11 4 ......Clare Thorner (7)
5 ILLETS SPUR (R J Clarke) D Geraghty 5 11 4 ......G Supple (5)
6 0 INSPIRE FOUNDATION (38) (Inspire Foundation Syndicate) Simon Earle 5 11 4 ......L Harvey
7 JUSTUCE ALONE (The Poppet Partnership) D Nicholson 5 11 4 ......R Massey (3)
8 KING'S ROAD (Mrs Nicholas Jones) N Twiston-Davies 5 11 4 ......M Keighley (7)
9 0 KNIVENIVEN (12) (K F Clutterbuck) K F Clutterbuck 5 11 4 ......L Cummins (5)
10 LORD EDGAR (F J Sainsbury) Mrs M Jones 6 11 4 ......D Bridgwater
11 0 LUCKY MASTER (6) (Mrs Ann Key) J Upson 6 11 4 ......R Supple
12 MR CHELSEA (Felix Rosenstiel's Widow & Son) J Gifford 5 11 4 ......W Greatrex (7)
13 MR UNIVERSE (Universal Conference & Incentive Trv Ltd) N Chance 6 11 4 ......G Bradley
14 NORTHERN YARN (Mrs L Bedford) J Cullinan 5 11 4 ......T J Murphy
15 00 ONE FINE MAN (53) (Mrs Theresa Walchel) T P Walshe 5 11 4 ......J Magee (3)
16 0 RISING TROUT (12) (Nick Elliott) R Buckler 5 11 4 ......B Powell
17 SAXIFRAGA (Manor Farm Stud (Rutland)) T Watson 5 11 4 ......R Thornton
18 *STAR OF DUNGANNON* (Stan Mellor) S Mellor 5 11 4 ......R Studholme (5)
19 0 THE BARRINGTON FOX (18) (The Fox Inn Partnership) R Smith 5 11 4 ......X Aizpuru (3)
20 UNDER THE CARPET (W E Sturt) J Old 6 11 4 ......M A Fitzgerald
21 0 WILLET TOWER (105) (D G Stephens) Miss V Stephens 6 11 4 ......Miss V Stephens
22 *ROBELLITA* (Angela Racing Syndicate) C Morlock 4 10 8 ......D Gallagher
23 SMINT (Food Brokers Ltd) J Gifford 4 10 8 ......O Burrows (5)
24 TILT AND TURN (Seamus Carroll) P Hobbs 4 10 8 ......R Dunwoody
25 6 YEOMAN SAILOR (13) (Mrs Jil Eynon & Mr Robin Eynon) Mrs J Pitman 4 10 8 ......A Dobbin
– 25 declared –

BETTING: 2-1 Indian Spring, 13-2 Justuce Alone, 7-1 Yeoman Sailor, 8-1 Under The Carpet, 10-1 Bosuns Mate, Tilt And Turn, 12-1 King's Road, Lord Edgar, Mr Chelsea, Smint, 20-1 others
1997: Mister Ermyn 4 10 7 R Hughes 2-1 jt fav (L Montague Hall) 8 ran

FORM GUIDE
INDIAN SPRING made all for a wide-margin win from The Pickled Duke on her debut at Haydock. Pick of the others to have run is **Yeoman Sailor**, a close sixth of 22 to Percy Parkeeper at Huntingdon on his debut, but there are any number of likely-looking newcomers. A few that appeal are **Bosuns Mate, Justuce Alone, Lord Edgar, Mr Universe, Tilt And Turn** and **Under The Carpet**. **Selection: INDIAN SPRING**

LUDLOW

HYPERION
1.40 Royal Then 2.10 Hand Woven 2.40 Cool Spring 3.15 Merlin's Lad 3.45 Scarrots 4.15 My Nominee 4.45 Deputy Leader

GOING: Good.
●Right-hand course. Chase course has sharper bends than hurdles course.
●Course is NW of town off A49. Ludlow station (Hereford - Shrewsbury line) 2m. **ADMISSION:** Club £14 (accompanied under-16s free); Tattersalls £9 (OAPs receive £2 refreshment voucher); Course £5. **CAR PARK:** Free).
●*LEADING TRAINERS:* M Pipe 23-93 (24.7%), D Nicholson 19-70 (27.1%), N Henderson 13-30 (43.3%), P Hobbs 13-71 (18.3%)).
●*LEADING JOCKEYS:* R Dunwoody 17-61 (27.9%), A Thornton 10-72 (13.9%); J R Kavanagh 9-67 (13.4%), S Wynne 9-90 (10%).
●*FAVOURITES:* 185-457 (40.5%).
BLINKERED FIRST TIME: Coble (1.40), Miss Mylette (1.40), Sally's Twins (visored)(2.40), Kasterlee (3.45).

1.40 CHURCH STRETTON SELLING H'CAP HURDLE (CLASS G) £2,000 added 2m

1 02240 AMONG ISLANDS (20) (CD) (BF) R Lee 7 11 10 Mr S Durack (5)
2 /6032- RIVA'S BOOK (534) (D) (BF) Mrs L Williamson 7 11 7 ......R Bellamy
3 6320 BOLLERO (25) J Berry 4 11 5 ......D Parker
4 /8542- CROMABOO CROWN (303) P Bevan 7 11 4 ......W Worthington
5 004F-P ANLACE (F38) (D) S Mellor 9 11 4 ......C Webb (3)
6 0-5250 ROYAL THEN (FR) (28) J Neville 5 11 1 ......R Johnson V
7 4-5045 ALDINGTON CHAPPLE (51) (D) T Wall 10 10 13 Mr O McPhail (7)
8 P-R40 CROAGH PATRICK (20) J Fox 6 10 12 ......S Fox
9 F30-14 NORTHERN NATION (43) (D) W Clay 10 10 11 ......G Tormey
10 /3426- BLURRED IMAGE (317) J C Poulton 7 10 7 ......A S Smith
11 5026 IMPALA (20) W G M Turner 4 10 6 ......J Power (7)
12 064 COBLE (13) D McCain 4 10 6 ......S Wynne B
13 10F-00 KENTAVRUS WAY (15) R J Price 7 10 5 ......B Fenton
14 080382 NORTHERN OPTIMIST (43) (D) B Llewellyn 10 10 5 ......Miss E J Jones (7)
15 054-P0 URBAN LILY (44) R Hodges 8 10 4 ......J Harris (7) B
16 -F04 FLAHIVE'S FIRST (28) D Burchell 4 10 3 ......D J Burchell
17 000P BEAR HUG (20) M Sheppard 5 10 2 ......S Curran
18 064-05 ROC AGE (68) G Davies 7 10 2 ......Mr R Wakley (5)
19 -FFPPP TAKE A FLYER (43) (D) R Hodges 8 10 1 ......T Dascombe B
20 P0P-FP MISS MYLETTE (42) D Wintle 7 10 0 ......W Marston B
– 20 declared –

Minimum weight: 10st. True handicap weight: Miss Mylette 9st 11lb.
BETTING: 9-2 Bollero, 5-1 Impala, 13-2 Northern Nation, 10-1 Among Islands, Coble, Flahive's First, 12-1 Royal Then, 14-1 Blurred Image, Croagh Patrick, Riva's Book, Urban Lily, 16-1 Cromaboo Crown, 20-1 Aldington Chapple, Anlace, Northern Optimist, 25-1 others

2.10 BRIDGNORTH NOVICE CHASE (CLASS E) £4,000 added 3m

1 2FP5B/ AMY'S BOY (715) D Wintle 9 11 2 ......W Marston
2 P252-U BAYLINE STAR (98) Miss H Knight 8 11 2 ......J F Titley
3 4/P0-P CHERRY ORCHID (65) J R Hughes 11 11 2 ......B Fenton
4 3151-3 FIRST HARVEST (47) (D) C Bennett 11 11 2 ......Mr P Henly
5 00F4F/ GODOR SPIRIT (646) W M Brisbourne 8 11 2 ......Gary Lyons
6 00-54P HAND WOVEN (84) N Twiston-Davies 6 11 2 ......C Maude
7 P-140P HOODWINKER (20) (C) (D) W Jenks 9 11 2 ......R Johnson
8 402520 JOVIAL MAN (26) (C) R O'Sullivan 9 11 2 ......A Thornton
9 RPP-0B KYLE DAVID (69) F Jordan 6 11 2 ......D Byrne
10 0/1-P2 LANCASTRIAN JET (57) (D) T Forster 7 11 2 ......S Wynne
11 562526 LANDED GENTRY (27) J O'Shea 9 11 2 ......Michael Brennan (3)
12 2FF-U0 WELL BANK (20) Mrs C Hicks 11 11 2 ......V Slattery
– 12 declared –

BETTING: 11-4 Bayline Star, 7-2 Landed Gentry, 4-1 Lancastrian Jet, 5-1 Jovial Man, 11-2 Hand Woven, 12-1 Hoodwinker, 14-1 First Harvest, 33-1 Amy's Boy, 50-1 others

2.40 HENLEY HALL GOLD CUP HANDICAP HURDLE (CLASS E) £4,000 added fillies & mares 2m 5f 110yds

1 -4231 MISS ROBERTO (F18) J O'Shea 5 12 0 ......Michael Brennan (3)
2 12431 QUISTAQUAY (21) (BF) J Mullins 6 11 1 ......A Bates (5)
3 31 COOL SPRING (58) T Forster 6 11 0 ......A Thornton
4 353-13 RIVERBANK ROSE (60) (BF) W Clay 7 10 12 ......G Tormey
5 -22253 THEME ARENA (F37) (C) M Pipe 5 10 10 ......J Evans V
6 1234/2 SPRING GRASS (28) (D) B Ryall 10 10 9 ......T Dascombe
7 64-366 SALLY'S TWINS (26) N Chance 5 10 8 ......Mr S Durack (5) V
8 6P-250 BALMORAL PRINCESS (8) D McCain 5 10 0 ......S Wynne B
9 P/31P- FIRST BEE (343) (C) F Jordan 7 10 0 ......D J Kavanagh (5)
10 000/53 B MY LOVELY (20) O O'Neill 8 10 0 ......H Oliver (7)
11 860-P0 POT BLACKBIRD (15) R Brotherton 9 10 0 ......S Curran
– 11 declared –

Minimum weight: 10st. True handicap weight: Balmoral Princess 9st 13lb, First Bee 9st 8lb, B My Lovely 9st 2lb, Pot Blackbird 8st 12lb.
BETTING: 100-30 Miss Roberto, 9-2 Quistaquay, 5-1 Cool Spring, 6-1 Theme Arena, 13-2 Riverbank Rose, 10-1 Sally's Twins, 12-1 Spring Grass, 14-1 Balmoral Princess, 16-1 B My Lovely, First Bee, 33-1 Pot Blackbird

3.15 ATTWOOD MEMORIAL TROPHY H'CAP CHASE (CLASS D) £5,500 added 2m 4f

1 3F3P33 ART PRINCE (27) (D) C Brooks 8 12 0 ......M Berry (7)
2 254-34 EVEN BLUE (53) (D) Mrs C Black 10 11 10 ......S Wynne
3 P311/ MERLIN'S LAD (646) T Forster 9 11 5 ......W Marston
4 U303/1 MR STRONG GALE (51) (CD) P Nicholls 7 10 11 ......A Thornton B
5 4P-622 FLAPJACK LAD (61) (D) N Twiston-Davies 9 10 10 ......C Maude
6 31/323 JASON'S BOY (16) (D) J M Bradley 8 10 5 ......R Johnson
7 1133/P YOUNG BALDRIC (47) Mrs J Pitman 11 10 0 ......D Leahy
– 7 declared –

Minimum weight: 10st. True handicap weight: Young Baldric 9st 11lb.
BETTING: 9-4 Mr Strong Gale, 4-1 Art Prince, 5-1 Even Blue, Merlin's Lad, 11-2 Jason's Boy, 10-1 Flapjack Lad, 12-1 Young Baldric

3.45 PETER STEPHENSON MAIDEN HURDLE (CLASS E) £3,000 added 2m

1 000 BUY MY PLY (27) H Webb 5 11 8 ......D J Moffatt
2 CORDIAL KNIGHT (F267) C Morlock 5 11 8 ......G Hogan (3)
3 0 FLORENTINO (80) Mrs V Ward 5 11 8 ......Michael Brennan (3)
4 0 GREAT WOLF (78) T Wall 5 11 8 ......Gary Lyons
5 328 IAMUS (61) (BF) D Nicholson 5 11 8 ......R Johnson
6 035 PORLOCK CASTLE (99) P Ritchens 5 11 8 ......S Fox
7 PRIVATE AUDIENCE (USA) (F40) W Muir 5 11 8 ......M Richards
8 U SERENDIPITY (FR) (76) (BF) M Pipe 5 11 8 ......J Lower
9 56P SNOWBOY (43) R Lee 6 11 8 ......B Fenton
10 F SO KEEN (15) A Bailey 5 11 8 ......S Wynne
11 /P-PPU WEEKEND WORKER (20) T Keddy 7 11 8 ......G Upton B
12 50 BUILT IN HEAVEN (42) J C Poulton 6 11 3 ......A S Smith
13 56/0- CHAMPAGNE FRIEND (347) D O'Neill 7 11 3 ......V Slattery
14 ON THE GREEN (F14) B Preece 5 11 3 ......J Mogford (7)
15 23 SCARROTS (21) N Henderson 4 10 12 ......J R Kavanagh
16 424 SHARP TEMPER (11) N Twiston-Davies 4 10 12 ......C Maude
17 354 KASTERLEE (FR) (41) M Pipe 4 10 7 ......J Evans B
18 0 THE IN-LAWS (25) O Sherwood 4 10 7 ......J A McCarthy
– 18 declared –

BETTING: 3-1 Iamus, 7-2 Scarrots, 4-1 Serendipity, 11-2 Sharp Temper, 10-1 Kasterlee, 12-1 The In-Laws, Porlock Castle, 14-1 Florentino, 20-1 Cordial Knight, On The Green, Private Audience, 33-1 others

4.15 PONTRILAS HUNTER CHASE (CLASS H) £1,500 added 2m 4f

1 P0345- BEAU BABILLARD (277) P Nicholls 11 12 7 ......Mr J Tizzard (5) B
2 03266- CARAGH BRIDGE (281) T Jones 11 12 7 ......Mr G Lewis (7)
3 1301-P MY NOMINEE (P17) (C) (D) D E Nichols 10 12 4 ......Mr R Burton (7) B
4 2313-P BUSMAN (P17) (D) K Pearce 9 12 0 ......Mr D S Jones (7)
5 1432P- DALAMETRE (275) M Evans 11 12 0 ......Mr M Munrowd (7)
6 01PFP- HIGHWAY FIVE (298) Lady S Brooke 10 12 0 ......Miss E James (7)
7 4P2F0- MOUNTHENRY STAR (279) (D) R Clank 10 12 0 Mr C Stockton (7)
8 U02-02 MR BEAN (113) Paul Morgan 8 12 0 ......Mr J Jukes (5)
9 P464P- PANT LLIN (317) (C) F Matthews 12 12 0 ......Mr M FitzGerald (7) B
10 P6-542 PRIDEAUX PRINCE (197) C Goodrson 12 12 0 ......Mr J M Pritchard (7)
11 0PPU3/ SOME OBLIGATION (662) (C) G Theme 13 12 0 ......Mr A Sansome (5)
12 P/0F5- CWM ARCTIC (291) Mrs A Price 11 11 9 ......Mr M Jackson (7)
– 12 declared –

BETTING: 3-1 Beau Babillard, 7-2 Busman, 4-1 My Nominee, 13-2 Caragh Bridge, 10-1 Dalametre, 12-1 Prideaux Prince, 14-1 Highway Five, Mounthenry Star, 16-1 Pant Llin, Mr Bean, 25-1 Some Obligation, 33-1 Cwm Arctic

4.45 WINSTANSTOW NOVICE HURDLE (CLASS E) £3,000 added 2m 5f 110yds

1 0-1204 EXALTED (51) W Jenks 5 11 5 ......G Hogan (3)
2 00-605 A VERSE TO ORDER (54) Miss P Whittle 7 10 12 ......Mr R Wakley (5)
3 332 BEEFY NOVA (20) N Twiston-Davies 6 10 12 ......C Maude
4 00-40 CATHAY (77) Mrs J Pitman 6 10 12 ......D Leahy
5 05- CEEYOU AT MIDNIGHT (323) S Brookshaw 7 10 12 ......S Wynne
6 U0-P COOLEST BY PHAR (21) Miss P Whittle 6 10 12 ......Mr O McPhail (7)
7 0-0 COOL NORMAN (NZ) (66) B De Haan 6 10 12 ......J Lawrence
8 020- DANTE'S GOLD (351) C Egerton 7 10 12 ......J A McCarthy
9 50/ DENNYS GOLD (1241) R Curtis 8 10 12 ......J Leech
10 5-36 DEPUTY LEADER (21) N Henderson 6 10 12 ......J R Kavanagh
11 14/32- GARRYNISK (345) D Gandolfo 8 10 12 ......G Upton
12 064222 HAILSTORM (21) D Nicholson 5 10 12 ......R Johnson
13 0 JELLABY ASKHIR (12) A Jarvis 6 10 12 ......W Marston
14 2/2-4P KINGSLAND TAVERNER (83) O Sherwood 7 10 12 ......M Richards
15 354 *NOBLE ATHLETE* (46) Mrs J Pitman 6 10 12 ......Mr S Durack (5)
16 01/53- ST MELLION DRIVE (368) (BF) A Hobbs 8 10 12 ......A Thornton
17 P- TIGER BRIGHT (297) T Wall 9 10 12 ......J Mogford (7)
18 0-5 WHISTLING RUFUS (61) N T-Davies 6 10 12 ......J Goldstein (7)
– 18 declared –

BETTING: 13-8 Hailstorm, 11-2 Beefy Nova, 6-1 Exalted, 7-1 Garrynisk, 8-1 St Mellion Drive, 10-1 Dante's Gold, Deputy Leader, Noble Athlete, 16-1 Cathay, 20-1 Kingsland Taverner, 33-1 others

WOLVERHAMPTON (AW)

HYPERION
1.50 Bathe In Light 2.20 Italian Symphony 2.50 Plan For Profit 3.25 Montecristo 3.55 Rockswain 4.25 I'm Tef

GOING: Standard. **STALLS:** 1m – outside; rest – inside.
DRAW ADVANTAGE: High from 6f to 1m 4f.
●Fibresand, left-hand, oval course.
●Course is N of town on A449. Wolverhampton station 1m. **ADMISSION:** Club £15; Tattersalls £6 (OAP members of Diamond Club £4); Viewing Restaurant £25.90 including entrance and meal. **CAR PARK:** free.
●*LEADING TRAINERS:* R Hollinshead 61-607 (10%), M Johnston 55-251 (21.9%), J Berry 44-303 (14.5%) P Haslam 37-203 (18.2%).
●*LEADING JOCKEYS:* G Carter 32-227 (14.1%), Dean McKeown 28-263 (10.7%), D Holland 23-132 (17.4%) D Wright 23-253 (9.1%).
●*FAVOURITES:* 387-1199 (32.3%).
BLINKERED FIRST TIME: Fairy Domino (visored) (3.55).

1.50 NENE MEDIAN AUCTION MAIDEN STAKES (CLASS E) £4,000 added 1m 4f

1 32 KATATONIC (J20) (BF) R Juckes 5 9 2 ......F Lynch 3
2 2524-0 NAKHAL (37) (BF) D Murray Smith 5 9 2 ......C Lowther (3) 2
3 000/24 SPECIALIZE (12) K Burke 6 9 2 ......D Sweeney (3) 9 V
4 0000-3 YAVERLAND (16) John Berry 5 9 2 ......M Fenton 1
5 LITTLE CAESAR S C Williams 4 8 13 ......G Carter 4
6 060-02 LAKE ARIA (30) G Woodward 5 8 11 ......L Charnock 5
7 25 POSIE CHAIN (30) N Littmoden 5 8 11 ......S Whitworth 8
8 3262-4 *BATHE IN LIGHT* (8) Lord Huntingdon 4 8 8 ......D Harrison 7
9 00-540 WHO DEALT (23) R Hollinshead 4 8 8 ......D Hayden (7) 6
– 9 declared –

BETTING: evens Bathe In Light, 3-1 Little Caesar, 6-1 Posie Chain, 8-1 Specialize, 12-1 Nakhal, Yaverland, 14-1 Lake Aria, 20-1 Who Dealt, 25-1 Katatonic

2.20 SEVERN CLAIMING LIMITED STAKES (CLASS F) £3,000 added 6f

1 10523- PALO BLANCO (79) (D) G L Moore 7 8 13 ......Candy Morris 7
2 85-102 THEATRE MAGIC (14) (C) D Shaw 5 8 12 ......J Fanning 1
3 -23212 FEATHERSTONE LANE (7) (C) (BF) Miss L Siddall 7 8 10 ......Dean McKeown 2
4 0108-2 ITALIAN SYMPHONY (4) (CD) P Evans 4 8 10 ......A McCarthy (5) 3 V
5 00-053 C-HARRY (4) (CD) R Hollinshead 4 8 8 ......F Lynch 5
6 46000- MOI CANARD (144) (CD) Pat Mitchell 5 8 4 ......Amanda Sanders 6
7 -30222 ULTRA BEET (13) (CD) P Haslam 5 8 4 ......L Charnock 4 B
8 000-06 SIR TASKER (19) (C) (D) J L Harris 10 8 2 ......J Quinn 8
– 8 declared –

BETTING: 3-1 Italian Symphony, 7-2 Palo Blanco, 4-1 Ultra Beet, 5-1 Featherstone Lane, 7-1 Theatre Magic, 8-1 C-Harry, 12-1 Sir Tasker, 16-1 Moi Canard

2.50 TYNE HANDICAP (CLASS D) £5,000 added 1m 100yds Penalty Value £3,371

1 1-1422 PLAN FOR PROFIT (4) (D) M Johnston 4 10 0 ......Dean McKeown 6
2 00053- QUEEN'S PAGEANT (47) J Spearing 4 9 13 ......S Drowne 3
3 16000- GREENAWAY BAY (USA) (216) W Musson 4 9 8 ......P Shea (7) 1
4 231-05 BARRIER RIDGE (14) (D) G L Moore 4 9 4 ......Candy Morris 2
5 1-1113 GODMERSHAM PARK (15) (D) (BF) P Felgate 6 8 11 ......G Parkin (3) 4
6 40000/ SEGALA (J365) (D) J J O'Neill 7 8 10 ......C Lowther (3) 5
– 6 declared –

BETTING: 11-10 Plan For Profit, 9-4 Godmersham Park, 7-2 Queen's Pageant, 10-1 Barrier Ridge, 12-1 Greenaway Bay, 20-1 Segala

3.25 THAMES HANDICAP (CLASS D) £5,000 added 1m 4f

1 1113- MONTECRISTO (82) (CD) (BF) R Guest 5 10 0 ......A McCarthy (5) 8
2 5052-5 NIKITA'S STAR (32) (CD) D Murray Smith 5 9 10 ......Dane O'Neill 2
3 1304-5 SUGA HAWK (18) (C) (D) E Alston 6 9 2 ......S Drowne 4
4 0000-0 JACK THE LAD (4) J Hetherton 4 8 13 ......T Siddall (7) 5
5 1000/4 BELLE'S BOY (9) (C) B Palling 5 8 6 ......T Sprake 3
6 043-53 SIDNEY THE KIDNEY (19) M Ryan 4 7 10 ......G Bardwell 1
7 0000-6 SWYNFORD CHARMER (5) J Hetherton 4 7 10 ......A Nicholls (7) 7
– 7 declared –

Minimum weight: 7st 10lb. True handicap weights: Sidney The Kidney 6st 12lb, Swynford Charmer 6st 10lb.
BETTING: 4-5 Montecristo, 9-2 Nikita's Star, 6-1 Suga Hawk, 8-1 Jack The Lad, 10-1 Belle's Boy, Sidney The Kidney, 20-1 Swynford Charmer

3.55 WELLAND SELLING STAKES (CLASS G) £2,500 added 3YO 5f

1 540-11 ORANGE BUSH (7) (C) (D) M Waring 9 5 ......D Holland 10
2 105-43 RISKY WHISKY (7) (CD) J Berry 9 5 ......C Lowther (3) 2 B
3 01-432 ROCKSWAIN (7) (CD) P Haslam 9 5 ......L Charnock 5
4 300-36 FAIRY DOMINO (6) (D) M Quinn 9 0 ......Dane O'Neill 9 V
5 64-532 MISS DANGEROUS (7) (CD) M Quinn 9 0 ......A Whelan 4
6 04-222 DANDE TIMES (16) K Ivory 8 12 ......Martin Dwyer 8 V
7 50400- AVIVA LADY (126) C Dwyer 8 7 ......D Williams (7) 1
8 40- INDIAN SPLENDOUR (87) R Guest 8 7 ......R Ffrench 6
9 50-0 LADY EMRAL (7) Miss J Craze 8 7 ......T Williams 3
10 0- SABLE CLOAK (117) J L Harris 8 7 ......J Quinn 12
11 460-03 SING FOR ME (7) R Hollinshead 8 7 ......A McCarthy (5) 11
12 0-5425 TILBURG (7) Mrs N Macauley 8 7 ......P McCabe (3) 7
– 12 declared –

BETTING: 11-4 Orange Bush, 7-2 Rockswain, 4-1 Indian Splendour, 5-1 Miss Dangerous, 6-1 Risky Whisky, 7-1 Dande Times, 10-1 Tilburg, 14-1 Fairy Domino, Sing For Me, 20-1 others

4.25 AVON HANDICAP (CLASS D) £5,000 added 3YO 7f

1 21-231 *I'M TEF* (12) (D) T Easterby 9 7 ......L Charnock 3
2 010- COLONEL CUSTER (176) C Thornton 9 4 ......Dean McKeown 2
3 0-3411 SHARP MONKEY (6) Mrs N Macauley 9 4 (6ex) P McCabe (3) 7 V
4 0113- MICHELEE (222) (C) P Evans 9 2 ......A McCarthy (5) 1
5 5-0528 POETTO (5) J Hetherton 8 13 ......Dane O'Neill 6 B
6 00-534 AMBER REGENT (21) P Haslam 8 8 ......C Lowther (3) 5
7 0866- FLIRTINA (245) P Evans 7 10 ......D Williams (7) 4
– 7 declared –

Minimum weight: 7st 10lb. True handicap weight: Flirtina 7st 5lb.
BETTING: evens I'm Tef, 11-4 Colonel Custer, 5-1 Poetto, 7 Sharp Monkey, 12-1 Michelee, 14-1 Amber Regent, 20-1 Flirtina

RESULTS

WARWICK
1.50: 1. UPGRADE (C Llewellyn) 3-1 fav; 2. Alhosaam 10-1; 3. Kilbride Lad 4-1. 21 ran. 9, 11. (N Twiston-Davies, Cheltenham). Tote: £4.40; £1.80, £3.30, £2.20. DF: £35.30. CSF: £37.32. Trio: £28.90. NR: French Mist.
2.20: 1. ASK THE BUTLER (A P McCoy) 11-4; 2. Sir Dante 4-1; 3. Step On Eyre 7-1. 13 ran. 5-2 fav Supreme Lady (unseated rider). 1, ¾. (M Pipe, Wellington). Tote: £3.70; £1.10, £1.90, £2.60. DF: £11.00. CSF: £14.64. Trio: £21.90.
2.50: 1. ARKLEY ROYAL (G Bradley) 11-8 fav; 2. King's Banker 4-1; 3. Surasum Corda 4-1. 23 ran. 8, 4. (J Old, Wroughton). Tote: £2.50; £1.60, £1.80, £1.90. DF: £6.40. CSF: £7.18. Trio: £16.70. NR: Knock Leader.
3.20: 1. A N C EXPRESS (A P McCoy) 11-8 fav; 2. Andre Laval 8-1; 3. Karar 8-1. 9 ran. 7, 4. (J King, Swindon). Tote: £2.20; £1.30, £3.00, £2.10. DF: £12.60. CSF: £13.34. Tricast: £65.19. Trio: £17.60.
3.50: 1. CHEERFUL ASPECT (N Williamson) 11-8 fav; 2. Harlequin Chorus 7-1; 3. Wadada 11-2. 8 ran. 21, 2. (Capt T Forster, Downton). Tote: £2.60; £1.40, £1.70, £1.90. DF: £9.60. CSF: £12.34. Tricast: £42.25.
4.20: 1. EARTHMOVER (Miss P Gundry) 10-11 fav; 2. Rusty Bridge 25-1; 3. Diamond Fort 20-1. 5 ran. 17, dist. (R Barber, Beaminster). Tote: £1.60; £1.30, £3.20. DF: £11.70. CSF: £15.34.
4.50: 1. ARDENTINNY (T Hagger) 4-1; 2. Knightsbridge Brad 8-1; 3. Threads 12-1. 22 ran. 7-4 fav Cherry Pie. 1½, sh-hd. (N Henderson, Lambourn). Tote: £5.20; £2.60, £3.70, £4.00. DF: £38.10. CSF: £42.49. Trio: £149.40.
Jackpot: £104.90
Placepot: £12.50. Quadpot: £4.20.
Place 6: £14.78. Place 5: £6.38.

CARLISLE
1.40: 1. HURST FLYER (A Dobbin) 14-1; 2. Quick March 20-1; 3. Second Fiddle 10-1. 18 ran. 2-1 fav Lippy Louise (4th). 7, 1¾. (F Murtagh, Carlisle). Tote: £17.20; £3.00, £3.40, £2.60. DF: £209.30. CSF: £241.86. Trio: £342.20; £110.86 carried forward to Ludlow 2.40 today.
2.10: 1. SWANBISTER (R Supple) 13-8; 2. Grate Deel 12-1; 3. Sniper 16-1. 13 ran. 6-4 fav Feels Like Gold (5th). 8, nk. (L Lungo, Carrutherstown). Tote: £2.80; £1.60, £3.30, £3.20. DF: £12.10. CSF: £20.76. Trio: £40.80.
2.40: 1. BROTHER OF IRIS (P Niven) 7-1; 2. Hadidi 10-1; 3. Spirit Of Steel 12-1. 18 ran. 11-10 fav Forever Noble. 2, ½. (Mrs M Reveley, Saltburn). Tote: £12.60; £3.50, £2.30, £4.30. DF: £55.40. CSF: £75.11. Trio: £196.60.
3.10: 1. MARBLE MAN (D Bentley) 7-4 fav; 2. Stormy Coral 4-1; 3. Rhossili Bay 8-4. 8 ran. 4, 10. (M Pell, Thirsk). Tote: £2.10; £1.10, £1.60. DF: £2.50. CSF: £8.81. NR: Flaming Miracle.
3.40: 1. CHERRY DEE (B Grattan) 5-1; 2. What Jim Wants 14-1; 3. Linlathen 6-1. 10 ran. 11-8 fav Mike Stan. 2½, 9. (P Beaumont, Brandsby). Tote: £6.50; £1.80, £2.60, £1.50. DF: £43.70. CSF: £70.28. Tricast: £407.08. Trio: £116.00.
4.10: 1. CHIPPED OUT (P Carberry) 11-8 fav; 2. Karenastino 12-1; 3. Potato Man 9-2. 11 ran. 8, 5. (Martin Todhunter, Ulverston). Tote: £2.10; £1.40, £2.90, £1.40. DF: £19.50. CSF: £18.44. Tricast: £62.28. Trio: £56.70.
4.40: 1. GUS CUNNINGHAM (G Lee) 12-1; 2. Percy Parkeeper 8-4 fav; 3. Young Thruster 8-1. 19 ran. 4, 6. (Mrs M Reveley, Saltburn). Tote: £13.80; £4.10, £1.10, £5.10. DF: £10.60. CSF: £35.02. Trio: £18.20. NR: Baltic Lake.
Placepot: £1775.10. Quadpot: £96.40.
Place 6: £ 829.27. Place 5: £73.31.

LINGFIELD
2.00: 1. ROBELLION (Dane O'Neill) 11-8 fav; 2. Amico 11-4; 3. Mutahadeth 7-2. 5 ran. Sh-hd, sh-hd. (Mrs L Stubbs). Tote: £1.70; £1.20, £2.10. DF: £2.30. CSF: £5.28.
2.30: 1. DANCING RIO (C Lowther) 10-11 fav; 2. Emperor's Gold 5-2; 3. Katie's Cracker 14-1. 10 ran. 2, 1¾. (P Haslam). Tote: £1.90; £1.20, £1.10, £3.70. DF: £2.70. CSF: £3.14. Trio: £12.60.
3.00: 1. STEAMROLLER STANLY (D Holland) 7-2; 2. White Plains 5-4 fav; 3. Herr Trigger 12-1. 6 ran. 9, 1½. (C Cyzer). Tote: £3.50; £3.00, £1.10. DF: £3.80. CSF: £7.77.
3.30: 1. RED PEPPER (S Whitworth) 15-8 fav; 2. Striding King 2-1; 3. Clonoe 5-1. 5 ran. (P Howling). Tote: £2.20; £1.10, £1.10. DF: £2.30. CSF: £5.68.
4.00: 1. SHERIFF (M Henry) 3-1; 2. Broughtons Formula 2-1 fav; 3. Distant Storm 5-1. 8 ran. 16, 1½. (J Hills). Tote: £5.40; £1.40, £1.30, £2.40. DF: £6.70. CSF: £9.62. Tricast: £28.09.
4.30: 1. MANOLO (D Holland) 5-1; 2. Ramsey Hope 11-2; 3. Anokato 5-1. 9 ran. 2-1 fav Mystical. 5, 3. (D Loder). Tote: £5.20; £1.50, £1.40, £1.60. DF: £31.30. CSF: £32.24. Tricast: £139.33. Trio: £51.00.
Placepot: £8.40. Quadpot: £6.30.
Place 6: £6.85. Place 5: £4.63.

●Graphic Equaliser was backed from 100-30 to 11-4 for Saturday's Tote Gold Trophy Handicap Hurdle at Newbury with William Hill yesterday. Carlito Brigante attracted interest with Coral and was cut from 12-1 to 8-1.

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Fraser refuses to be fazed by narrow defeat

'I should have bloody caught it,' admitted Angus Fraser of the slip that precipitated England's defeat in the second Test. Otherwise, the big bowler had an outstanding game at Queen's Park Oval.

And, he informs Derek Pringle, he is confident the next encounter with the West Indies will be markedly different.

In the aftermath of the second Test, England's players are taking a two-day break in order to lick wounds and recharge their batteries. But while a round of golf or a boat trip round the Gulf of Paria may serve as pleasant diversions, one question refuses to go away: with another Test due to start on Friday, how do you begin to snapping again at your opponent's heels when you've just had your teeth kicked in?

One man who should know the answer is Angus Fraser, for whom it was third time unlucky at the Queen's Park Oval. Apart from performing heroically with the ball, taking 11 for 110, Fraser was also partially the villain of the piece, dropping David Williams off his own bowling with the very first ball of the final morning.

"I should have bloody caught it," said the hulking Middlesex bowler the morning after, confessing that he also felt knackered and hungover. "With only half a dozen caught-and-bowled catches in my career I wasn't really expecting it. But it came back at a nice height and a nice pace, so even though I had to dive to my right, I really should have snaffled it.

"As I picked myself up off the deck, memories of us dropping Shivnarine Chanderpaul here last time came flooding back, but I really didn't think that we could lose again. That said, Carl Hooper played superbly. When you think that he was stuck in the twenties for an hour and a half and still didn't give it away. On that pitch, it has to be one of the great innings."

With two days at leisure, Fraser believes it is up to the individual to cope as best they can with the after effects of losing a match England ought to have won.

"Athers [captain Michael Atherton] was just saying the other night that when you win, how everyone comes together to celebrate, but when you lose how fragmented it is. I guess it's natural that people just want to spend time on their own. That's certainly the way I feel, and I did well.

"There is nothing daunting for me about playing the next Test at the same ground, and although I'll most probably spend the next day feeling sorry for myself, I'll be revved up in time for Friday. Hopefully we can redeem ourselves and get back into the series."

One player who may perhaps be tempted to spend the next few days doing a Greta Garbo is Andrew Caddick who, on a pitch tailor-made for tall pace bowlers, failed to take a single wicket.

But if the England coach, David Lloyd, was quick to implicate Caddick when he said: "Two bowlers underperformed big time on that pitch, and one of those has the experience to do better," Fraser, was more charitable about his team-mate.

"OK, we might have bowled better as a side, but Caddy [Caddick] can bowl, and his recent Test record is as good as anyone's. He's a top bowler and there is no reason why he shouldn't turn it round and do well in the next Test.

"You're not going to be able to bowl well every time. In fact I felt I bowled much better in the second innings, and I got three wickets instead of eight. It's the same with Dean [Headley]. He's proved he can bowl at this level last summer. It's just that as you become a better bowler, you tend to have fewer poor days."

There is a theory going round that Fraser, having shouldered so much over the first four days of the match, had little left to give on the last, when his probing seam and bounce were most needed.

"I didn't feel that, and I felt really good for my first five overs. Mind you, when the second new ball arrived I did feel weary. It's true that I do throw myself at the match and I can't pace myself. I guess sometimes your mind may feel good but your body simply won't respond. That's when you get into bad habits, like bowling the wrong line."

Yet it was precisely because Fraser did not get into bad habits, and kept an immaculate line and length, that he prospered. On a pitch offering so much help, there is no need for variety or experimentation. So why could not the other pace bowlers follow his example?

"When you're not getting wickets, you start doubting yourself. On that pitch, where some balls die and others fly through, you begin to wonder whether that inconsistency is down to you and not the pitch. Then, instead of relaxing into a rhythm, you start trying too hard, and that's when you lose your action and most likely your accuracy, too."

Having not bowled in a Test match since the Cape Town Test two years ago – he was dropped by Raymond Illingworth, who sent out sundry unsubtle signals to the Middlesex bowler that he did not rate him – Fraser has more reason than most to be cheerful about his dismissal of Brian Lara in the first innings, his 123rd in Test cricket.

"When Athers caught him at mid-off, I said it may be Lara but that wicket is special for another reason. When he asked why, I said, it's taken me past Illy [Illingworth].

"I'm not sure why Illy didn't rate me. I think it's because he didn't think I could bowl on flat pitches. Maybe that's true, but on pitches like the one here, I'm a dangerous prospect, because I generally get the ball in the right areas. If the next Test pitch at Queen's Park is anything like the last one, I won't mind bowling on it."

A pensive Angus Fraser reflects on what might have been after the presentation of trophies on Monday
Photograph: Kieran Doherty/Reuters

In search of the perfect partner for Shearer

As Glenn Hoddle's men prepare to meet Chile at Wembley tonight, the spotlight will dwell upon those chosen to fill the striking roles. Ken Jones looks back at England's World Cup forwards.

An abundance of strikers. Alan Shearer working back to match fitness, Michael Owen's exciting progress. No wonder that Glenn Hoddle is thought to be envied by every other coach in the World Cup finals.

But wait a minute. Robbie Fowler is underachieving, Les Ferdinand is injured again after missing most of the season, Chris Sutton's pique has probably ruled him out of contention and, at 32, the dip in Ian Wright's performances could be permanent.

Beginning at Wembley tonight, Hoddle will have his strikers under close scrutiny, marking them up or down for individual effectiveness and collective understanding.

Barring a serious setback in rehabilitation, Shearer is a certainty, leaving two, maybe three of the 19 outfield places to be filled by designated attackers, a category into which Teddy Sheringham falls despite the blurring of function brought about by strategic development.

The success of a partnership put in place by Terry Venables for *Euro 96* makes Sheringham the favourite to operate in conjunction with Shearer, whose role he could duplicate in emergency. If further proof of maturity leads to Owen's inclusion, World Cup history suggests that only one other place will be available to Hoddle's remaining strikers, with the choice falling possibly on Dion Dublin, who has not only the advantage of being able to fill in at centre-half but to provide an aerial threat.

Strange things can happen. It was unthinkable that England could win the 1966 World Cup without Jimmy Greaves, who was established beyond all reasonable doubt as one of the greatest goalscorers football had ever known. But Greaves failed to regain his place from Geoff Hurst after dropping out through injury.

Less than a month before recording the only hat-trick in a World Cup final, shortly after Greaves put four goals past Norway, it was thought unlikely that Hurst (substitutes were not introduced until 1970) would appear in the tournament. Struggling to overcome the difficulties imposed by a barren, bumpy surface, Hurst looked so clumsy when selected for a friendly against Denmark in Copenhagen that Alf Ramsey's judgement was called into question by a member of England's training staff. "Not up to it," was Harold Shepherdson's private word on Hurst as we passed through Copenhagen airport the following morning.

With only three strikers in his squad, Ramsey returned to the pairing of Greaves and Roger Hunt for England's final warm-up, their toughest, against Poland in Katowice. Powerful and selfless, Hunt secured victory with the game's only goal.

England's World Cup strikers since 1966

1966: Geoff Hurst, Jimmy Greaves, Roger Hunt.
1970: Hurst, Francis Lee, Allan Clarke, Peter Osgood, Jeff Astle.
1982: Paul Mariner, Tony Woodcock, Peter Withe.
1986: Tony Hateley, Gary Lineker, Kerry Dixon.
1990: Lineker, Steve Bull.

When Hunt and Hurst clicked as a pair in Greaves' absence (the Tottenham forward failed to score in three group games) a pattern was set, critically, to the team's private satisfaction. In a book we later did together, Bobby Charlton wrote: "I felt for Jimmy [Greaves] but I don't think any of us were astonished by Alf's decision. When Geoff Hurst came in for him against Argentina it all began to slot into place. Roger Hunt was a certainty; he was strong, he was tough, he scored goals and he'd run all day. He and Geoff suddenly hit it off.

"They tugged defenders out of position, opening up gaps we could get into from midfield. Geoff also had a good understanding with the other West Ham players, Bobby Moore and Peters. So, on the one hand, Alf had Hurst and Hunt who would sweat cobs and, on the other, Greaves, a fantastic finisher, but a moderate team player. I'm sure that Alf didn't think himself brave in leaving Jimmy out. He simply did what he felt was best for the team."

The international careers of Greaves and Hunt were over when Ramsey assembled his strike force for the 1970 finals in Mexico. Able to use substitutes, bearing in mind the difficulties of playing at altitude in extreme heat, he increased the complement to five. Realising the need for a more measured approach, he chose Manchester City's skilful and pugnacious winger Francis Lee to play up front with Hurst, with Allan Clarke of Leeds United, the tall West Bromwich Albion centre-forward Jeff Astle and Chelsea's Peter Osgood as back-up.

Strikers came and went during the 12 years that would separate England from their next appearance in the finals, including three – Paul Mariner of Ipswich, Arsenal's Tony Woodcock, and Peter Withe of Aston Villa – taken by Ron Greenwood to Spain in 1982.

Bobby Robson's choice of three strikers for the 1986 World Cup finals in Mexico led to so much indecision that England were soon thinking about an embarrassing early exit. Robson took Mark Hateley of Milan, Gary Lineker, who would shortly join Barcelona from Everton, with the burly Chelsea centre-forward, Kerry Dixon.

Poor performances, a near mutiny, the recurrence of Bryan Robson's shoulder injury and the loss of Ray Wilkins, who was sent off against Morocco, led to the inclusion of Gary Lineker to play in partnership with Peter Beardsley. Lineker's hat-trick against Poland secured England a place in the next round, saving Bobby Robson's reputation.

Only two players, Lineker and the muscular Wolverhampton Wanderers centre-forward Steve Bull, could be regarded as strikers when Robson announced his squad for the 1990 finals in Italy. Along with Beardsley, Chris Waddle and John Barnes, they appeared on the squad sheet as forwards.

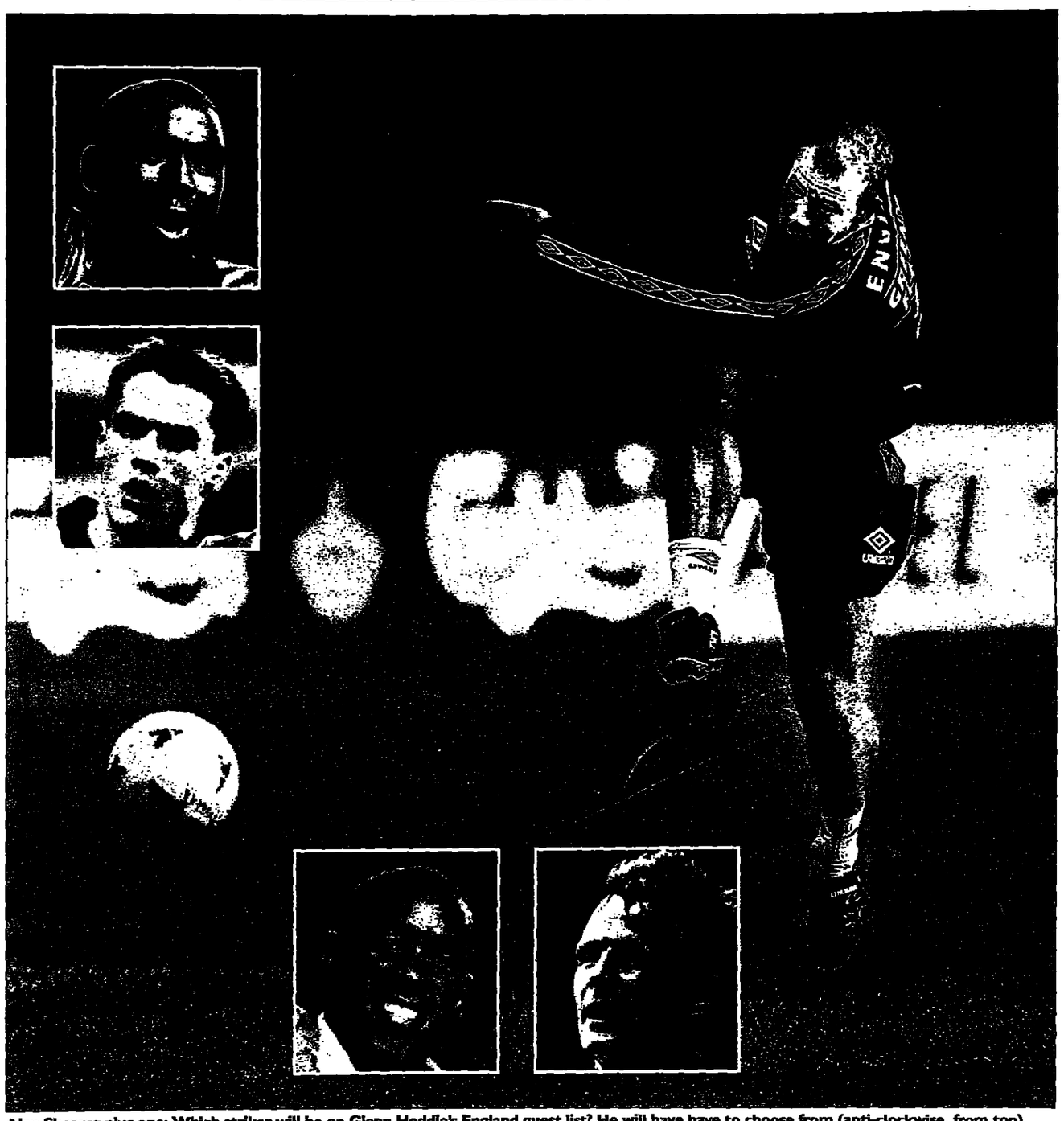
If this is the most sensible designation (Pele had no specific role for Brazil) television and newspapers do not allow for it. Shearer has all the attributes associated historically with centre-forwards, but how do you describe Sheringham? In old-fashioned terms, he is essentially an attacking inside-forward with the subtlety and vision to make chances as well as being a chance taker.

The fruitful partnership Sheringham and Andy Cole have struck up for Manchester United may well strengthen the case for Cole's inclusion if he shows the temperament for international football.

Owen is surely prominent in Hoddle's thinking, his development so rapid that age hardly enters the equation. Uncommonly in a speedster, Owen's head is always up, and who in England can claim to be a more clinical finisher?

Hoddle's choice narrows. From being perhaps the most promising of England's young strikers, Fowler has fallen behind but has time in which to recover form; Ferdinand's history of injuries make him a risk; Wright's best days are gone.

But who knows? Hurst came out of nowhere to make history. Lineker's international career was shaped by the mistakes in selection and strategy that caused a shake-up. For Greaves, whose record of 44 international goals has only been bettered by Charlton (49) and Lineker (48), the World Cup brought only a shattering personal disappointment.



Alan Shearer plus one: Which striker will be on Glenn Hoddle's England guest list? He will have have to choose from (anti-clockwise, from top) Andy Cole, Michael Owen, Dion Dublin and Teddy Sheringham
Photograph: Chris Turvey/Empics

Chile – 10 fascinating footballing facts

1 Chile were banned by Fifa, world football's ruling body, from the 1994 World Cup in the United States following a bizarre incident in a qualifier against Brazil for the 1990 finals in Italy. Rojas, their goalkeeper, feigned injury after claiming he had been hit by a smoke bomb thrown from the crowd in an attempt to have the game abandoned. The "blood" he was covered in was said by Fifa to come from a capsule he burst over himself.

2 Chile's World Cup game with Italy in the 1962 finals on home soil became known as the "Battle of Santiago". It was described by a young David Coleman as one of the "most shameful" things television viewers would ever see, with a collection of vicious fouls that are best described as "agricultural." For good measure several fights broke out and, for the record, Chile won 2-0.

3 The 1962 finals on home soil brought Chile's best performance in a World Cup. They lost to Brazil in the semi-finals but beat Yugoslavia 1-0 in the third-place play-off. This year will be their seventh appearance in the finals and first since 1982 in Spain, when they lost to West Germany, Algeria and Austria in the first round.

4 Chile were England's first opponents in a World Cup finals, in 1950 in Brazil. England won 2-0 with goals from Stan Mortensen and Wilf Mannion before the infamous defeat by the United States in the next group game in Belo Horizonte.

5 Chile hold the unenviable record for drawing the smallest crowd to Wembley for an England match. Only 15,628 turned up for the 0-0 draw in 1989, when the gate was affected by a public transport strike.

6 Anyone expecting an away win at Wembley is likely to be disappointed. Chile had an excellent home record in the qualifiers for France, winning six out of seven games, but they failed to win a single match away.

7 It took Chile until their 34th international to register a victory. They made up for lost time, though, with a 7-1 win over Bolivia in 1926.

8 British nationals introduced the game to Chile in the late 19th century and the influence remains, with one club called Everton. The Chilean FA was formed in 1895 and is the fifth oldest in the world.

9 The last time England played Chile away was on the South American tour of 1984. England drew 0-0 there and lost 2-0 to Uruguay, with the sole victory coming over Brazil with goals from Mark Hateley and the unforgettable solo effort by John Barnes.

10 Chile qualified for the 1974 World Cup finals when the Soviet Union were disqualified for failing to fulfil their two-leg play-off match against the South Americans. The first leg ended 0-0, but the Soviets refused to play in Santiago because of the political situation there. The United States had backed a military coup to remove Salvador Allende's radical Chilean government. Chile kicked off the match with no opposition.

Villa protest over approach to Milosevic

Aston Villa have accused Atletico Madrid of making an illegal approach for their striker Savo Milosevic and have reported the Spanish club to Fifa, world football's ruling body, and the Football Association.

Villa are upset that Atletico's president, Jesus Gil, approached Milosevic without seeking their permission before he was transfer-listed after his spitting outburst at Blackburn.

Gil was heard on Spanish radio claiming Atletico, Villa's opponents in the Uefa Cup quarter-finals next month, had reached an agreement with the Serb to join Atletico at the end of the season.

Milosevic said yesterday that he is prepared to risk missing out on playing in the World Cup finals with Yugoslavia by deciding not to play for Villa.

Milosevic said: "If I am not playing for Aston Villa then I will not be in the national team. That's the policy that is adopted back home. It will be a big disappointment if I don't go to France – but I am willing to take that risk."

Blackburn Rovers completed the signing of the Scotland Under-21 defender Callum Davidson yesterday, paying St Johnstone £1.75m.

Marcus Gayle, of Wimbledon, and Portsmouth's Fitzroy Simpson both scored as Jamaica defeated El Salvador 2-0 in Los Angeles on Monday to move into the Concacaf Gold Cup semi-finals, where they meet Mexico.

Lynam secures time concession

Des Lynam yesterday won his fight with the BBC to allow *Match of the Day* to kick off earlier on a Saturday night.

The flagship show's presenter had been unhappy with the 10.50pm Saturday start time, which he said was "in the land of the nodding-off". The BBC has announced that the show will gradually move to an earlier time slot, with a 10.30pm start by the end of the season.

Highbury veterans sign up for senior service

Steve Bould and Nigel Winterburn yesterday ended speculation about their Arsenal futures by signing new contracts.

The veteran defenders, who have both been at Highbury for more than 10 years, have committed themselves to an extra year with the Gunners after their present deals run out this summer. They could have become free agents under the Bosman transfer law and commanded lucrative signing-on fees elsewhere. The Gunners' manager, Arsène Wenger, will now hold talks with his right-back, Lee Dixon, to decide whether to exercise the extra year's option on the 33-year-old's contract, which also expires this summer.

Scotland's top 10 clubs yesterday issued a legally binding document to their lower league counterparts, promising an expanded breakaway league of at least 12 clubs from the 2000-01 season. They have also guaranteed the clubs from the First, Second and Third Divisions a financial support package estimated at £1.7m per season. The breakaway élite have also promised a £250,000 payment to this year's First Division runners-up as compensation for the loss of a play-off place.

The document was issued before Thursday's special general meeting of all Scottish League clubs at Hampden Park when the élite clubs are hopeful that their proposals for a new league will be passed.

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TENNIS

Becker rolls back years to fell Henman at the first

Having lost to a German Sinner in the first round of the Dubai Duty Free Open last year, it was probably expecting a lot for Britain's Tim Henman to overcome a veritable German tennis saint this time. Boris Becker played up to his reputation last night, gradually overpowering Henman 7-5, 6-0 with the consistency of his serving and the authority of his ground strokes.

Confidence has not been Henman's strong suit of late. This was his third consecutive first-round defeat, and his fourth defeat in a row including the Sydney final against the Slovakian, Karol Kucera. The recent defeats by the Frenchman Jerome Golmard in the first round of the Australian Open and last week to Germany's Ranier Schuttler in Split were akin to his early exit in Dubai a year ago at the hands of Martin Sinner.

Hoping to restore vitality to his game last night, Henman had the misfortune to meet a fit, sleek Becker who, though ranked 46 places below the Briton at No 64 in the world, showed glimpses of his irresistible form during the mid-1980s. Semi-retired, and keeping in trim mainly through training with the young German players in his charge, Becker showed an admirable appetite for the contest against an opponent seven years his junior.

Even when Henman was able to accomplish a semblance of parity during the opening set, Becker only conceded one point of his serve apart from being broken to love for 2-2, when he contributed two double-faults. Indeed, the only other point he lost on serve during the set was a double fault in the second game. Henman stayed in contention up to 5-5, but was then broken in the next game, netting a forehand after Becker pounced on a second serve.

After securing the set in 43 minutes, Becker romped through the remaining games in only 24 minutes. Henman became distinctly more uncomfortable by the second, especially after being broken in the opening game, when Becker cracked him with two excellent service returns. The German did not offer Henman even a sniff on his serve after the second game until the match was virtually won. With Becker serving at 5-0, Henman produced one of his best counters, a forehand down the line. After that, only a backhand steered over the baseline delayed the German's progress to the second round.

"I was pretty happy with the way things had gone until the end of the second set," said Henman, who today partners Becker in the first round of the doubles against the Spanish pairing of Alex Corretja and Javier Sanchez. "Definitely after that it was a case of his raising his game while mine dropped off a bit. It's probably a confidence thing. It's difficult playing when you don't have a great deal of confidence and it's something you have to work through on the practice court. It's definitely a learning process. You have to learn how to deal with these defeats."

Becker was generous to Henman. "He's having a very good career so far," he said. "He's a good player and matches like tonight's will only make him stronger if he learns from them. I think he can have a good season."

Marcelo Rios, the No 2 seed, departed as ineffectually in the first round here as he did in the final of last month's Australian Open. The Chilean was dispatched, 6-3, 6-3, by New Zealand's Brett Steven, ranked No 50 in the world. It was perhaps not surprising that Rios was late to the ball. He was late to the event, having forgotten his passport on Friday and changed his flight plans to Sunday.

Jeff Tarango experienced a stress-free afternoon, advancing to the second round at the expense of the No 5 seed, Sergi Bruguera, 6-3, 6-3. The often-volatile American was calmly efficient on this occasion, his only problems arising when it came to finishing the job. He required three match points and was helped along by a net cord.

– John Roberts, Dubai

WINTER OLYMPICS

Dutch speed skater Erben Wennermars (right) is grounded after crashing with Norway's Grunde Njos (left) on the final turn in a 500-metre race in the Winter Olympics in Nagano yesterday. It was later confirmed that Wennermars had broken an arm Photograph: Michael Probst/AP

Britain brushed aside by brilliance of Canada

The British curling teams had mixed fortunes yesterday, but the future of the sport in this country seems secure as *Mike Rowbottom* explains from Karuizawa.

In retrospect, it was not the occasion Britain's men's curling team would have wished for Princess Anne to witness.

As their Royal spectator gazed down from her seat in the Kazakoshi Park Arena, the British skip, Dougie Dryburgh and his three Scottish compatriots saw their Winter Olympic medal ambitions thrown into harsh perspective by their second defeat of the day.

To lose to the tournament favourites, Canada, was neither a surprise nor a disgrace. But the margin of victory – 10-3, with two of the 10 ends not required – caused Dryburgh to purse his lips in dissatisfaction afterwards.

"They were too good for us," the 32-year-old RAF Flight Lieutenant said. "We weren't firing on four cylinders today. I don't know why, because the boys seemed to be up for it at the start of play.

"But you've got to be sharp to win at this level, and we certainly weren't that today. To lose 10-3 was a monumental gubbins."

What made the events of the day harder to take for the team who represent one of Britain's three realistic medal prospects here was the fact that they followed an ideal debut on the previous day, when curling had made its own official debut in the Olympics.

A 4-2 win over Norway in the first of their seven round-robin matches put the Scottish – sorry, British – quartet of Dryburgh, brothers Philip and Peter Wilson and Ronnie Napier in a strong position for yesterday's fixtures against Switzerland and Canada.

But the morning match was lost 10-4, and the evening match turned into – well, a monumental gubbins.

The four Scots had appeared relaxed enough before last night's match, with Napier venturing a little air guitar in accompaniment to the booming introductory music.

But after going 2-0 down in the first end, the mood of the Scots grew dour as the Canadians, skipped by the ineffably laid-back Mike Harris, shut them out of the match.

Harris provided a striking contrast to the wiry, increasingly worried figure of Dryburgh as they stood side by side directing the stones launched down the pebbled ice by their colleagues.

This centuries-old game, which has strong similarities with bowls, is sometimes known as "chess on ice" because of the subtlety of the tactics involved. Last night, Harris made it look something far simpler – draughts on ice, perhaps.

Britain's men still have four group matches remaining to secure one of the four semi-final places. But they need to rediscover the form that brought them the European bronze medal shortly before Christmas as they face Sweden today.

"There's still a long way to go," Dryburgh said. "We need to win three out of four. It's possible – but we need to win against Sweden. We don't want to go two days without a win."

The Princess, who stayed on to commiserate with the British players, is said to be both keen and knowledgeable about the game. "She said she had enjoyed the match, and told us 'hard luck, but keep on going,'" Dryburgh said.

Dryburgh acknowledges that all the media attention which has come the game's way since its inclusion in the Games has been hugely beneficial.

The midday session of play saw the cameras focused on Britain's women as they secured their second win in three games. A thrilling finish decided with the last delivery was beautifully timed for the visiting minister for sport, Tony Banks.

"He was very enthusiastic about what he had seen," a member of the British curling party said. "And he said he would be putting a lot more money into the sport back home."

The future, then, looks bright for this sporting fusion of deep thought, radar vision and frantic brushing – even if the medium-term prospects for Dryburgh and co look difficult.

One thing was certain yesterday night. There was no question of them drowning their sorrows. "We've all given up drinking for the last three months," Dryburgh said. "We are taking this very seriously." A Scotsman could hardly get more serious...

Gooch flu scare dismissed as skiers lose out

Fears that the British speed skater Nicky Gooch had become the first athlete in Nagano to be stricken by a flu bug sweeping the Japanese Alps were dismissed yesterday.

"He just has a slight cold," said a British team spokesman, Mark Howell. "Several of the team are sniffling." Gooch, one of Britain's medal hopes at the Winter Games, will compete in the 500 metres and 1,000m short track races which begin next week.

The International Olympic Committee has warned athletes about a flu bug after more than 1,000 people in the area were stricken by a virus. It causes high fever, pain in the joints and stomach ache.

British skiers made a bad start to the Alpine events when James Ormond and Andrew Freshwater both went off after missing gates on the first run of the men's combined slalom. Ireland's Paul-Patrick Schwarzacher-Joyce made it to the bottom but 12 seconds slower than the first-run winner, Mario Reiter of Austria.

Austria's Hermann Maier, a favourite for five events, is unlikely to win the combined title after making a bad mistake which left him three seconds off the pace.

Russia's Artur Dimitriev produced a classic display, along with Oksana Kazakova, to become the first man to win the Olympic pairs figure-skating titles with different partners.

Lazutina finds path to gold through snow

The Olympics suffered another confrontation with the weather yesterday as Russia emerged on top, winning its second women's cross-country gold and setting a medal milestone in the fresh snow.

Some skiing favourites lost their balance, but Larissa Lazutina braved a snowstorm on the cross-country course to win the five-kilometre race and become the Games' first double-medalist, edging out Katerina Neumannova, of the Czech Republic.

Lazutina won silver in the 15km on Sunday. It also was the 100th gold medal for Russia and the former Soviet Union since first entering the Winter Games in 1956.

In the inaugural women's snowboard giant slalom, many contenders fell or slipped off the course, hampered by poor visibility and treacherous conditions on a hardened course dusted with fresh snow. But France's Karine Ruby, the favourite, mastered the bumpy course and took a big lead after the first of two runs.

The women's super-G was postponed yesterday, adding at least another day before an Alpine medal would be awarded. "You want snow because it's a winter event, but it's like 'We've got enough now, thank you'," said the US skier, Picabo Street, a favourite to take a medal here.

The International Olympic Committee remained unfazed. "There is nothing abnormal or unusual. The Games are held on snow and ice," said the IOC spokeswoman Michele Verdier.

NAGANO TIMETABLE

(Times GMT)

TODAY

Alpine skiing: Men's combined slalom, first leg 00.30; second leg: 04.00.
Ski jumping: Men's 90-metre individual 00.30.
Freestyle skiing: Men's and women's moguls finals 03.00.
Speedskating: Women's 3000 metres 08.00.
Ice hockey: Women: Sweden v Canada 03.00; Japan v China 07.00; US v Finland 11.00.
Luge: Women's singles, second run 05.00.
Biathlon: Men's 20km 04.00.
Curling: Men's fourth round 05.00 (inc Sweden v Britain). Women's fourth round 24.00 (inc Britain v US. Women's fifth round 10.00 (inc Canada v Britain).
Television times: BBC2 0745-0845, 1230-1440, 1900-2030; BBC1 2350-0300. Eurosport 24-hour coverage.

TOMORROW

Cross-country: Men's 10km classic style 00.00. Women's 10km freestyle pursuit 03.00.
Snowboarding: Men's and women's half pipe, elimination round 00.30; finals 04.30.
Speedskating: Men's 1500 metres 08.00.
Figure skating: Men's short programme 10.00.
Ice hockey: Men, classification round 03.00; 13th/14th place play-offs 07.00; 11th/12th place play-offs 11.00. Women: China v Sweden 03.00; US v Japan 07.00; Finland v Canada 11.00.
Curling: Men's fifth round 24.00 (inc Britain v Japan); sixth round 10.00 (inc Britain v Germany). Women's sixth round 05.00 (inc Britain v Germany).
Television times: BBC2 0745-0845, 1230-1440, 1900-2030; BBC1 2350-0300. Eurosport 24-hour coverage.

SPORTING DIGEST

American football
The San Francisco 49ers have waived the linebacker Kevin Greene and the cornerback Rod Woodson, clearing $5.9m (£3.7m) against the salary cap.

Athletics
Jamie Baulch, the world indoor 400 metres silver medallist, will miss this month's European Championships in Valencia after suffering a hamstring injury. The 24-year-old was absent from last weekend's official trials in Birmingham and will also sit out Sunday's Bupa Grand Prix meeting at the same venue, after which the British team will be selected.
Sally Gunnell is joining Channel Four as a presenter on the magazine programme *British Athletics*. The former Olympic champion will make her first appearance alongside Steve Cram at the Bupa Indoor Grand Prix in Birmingham on Sunday.

Boxing
Oscar de la Hoya's mandatory defence against the Frenchman, Patrick Charpentier, on 28 February in Atlantic City, New Jersey, has been postponed after the World Boxing Council welterweight champion injured his right wrist. The bout is expected to be held next month.

Cricket
The Indian Cricket Board yesterday filed a defamation suit against Manoj Prabhakar for accusing team-mates of match-fixing. The former India all-rounder is being taken to court along with *Outlook* magazine, in which he alleged that an unnamed team-mate offered him money to lose a one-day match against Pakistan in 1994.
SECOND ONE-DAY INTERNATIONAL (Wellington, NZ): Australia 297 for 6 (50 overs; M E Waugh 85, D S Lehmann 82); New Zealand 231 (47.3 overs; C L Cairns 67). Australia won by 66 runs and lead four-match series 2-0.

Cycling
Britain's Jeremy Hunt won the 159.5km third stage of the Majorca Challenge yesterday to move into the overall lead. The 23-year-old team Banesto rider beat the Australian Robbie McEwen in a sprint finish with Spain's Miguel Angel Martin Perdiguero third.

Football
The Football Association has blocked a move by the Republic of Ireland to play Jamaica in a friendly international at Loftus Road on Sunday 22 March. The FA was concerned about the effect an international match would have on local League and non-League games that weekend.
Peter Reid, the Sunderland manager, is stepping up his search for a goalkeeper after losing Luke Weaver for the rest of the season. The England Under-18 international broke his jaw in two places in a reserve match against Middlesbrough on Monday. Phil Naisbett, the youth team goalkeeper, is out for the season with a shoulder injury and, with the previous reserve goalkeeper Edwin Zoetebier transferred to Feyenoord a month ago, Reid has no cover for Lionel Perez.
Nigel Pepper, the Bradford City midfielder, yesterday signed an extension to his contract which will keep him at Valley Parade until June 2000. However, Pepper faces a two-match ban, starting on Saturday, after being sent off for the second time this season, against Ipswich.
REPUBLIC OF IRELAND B TEAM (v Northern Ireland B, Tolka Park, Dublin, tonight): Colgan (Chelsea); Maybury (Leeds), Dunne (Everton), Worrell (Blackburn), Hardy (Wrexham), Kinsella (Charlton), Kavanagh (Stoke), Farrelly (Everton, capt), Devine (Barnet), Keane (Wolves), Duff (Blackburn).
NATIONWIDE FOOTBALL LEAGUE Re-arranged fixtures: Tue 10 Mar: Darlington v Shrewsbury (from 2 Dec). Wed 25 Mar: Millwall v Preston North End (from 3 Jan). Tue 7 Apr: Sheffield Utd v Middlesbrough (from 17 Feb). Fri 17 Apr: Middlesbrough v Manchester City (from 18 Apr).
CONCACAF GOLD CUP (Los Angeles): Jamaica 2 (Gayle 41, Simpson 62) El Salvador 0 (Jamaica progress to semi-final against Mexico tomorrow).
FOUR NATIONS TOURNAMENT (Valletta, Malta): Latvia 2 (Pahars 33, 52) Albania 2 (Kola 43, 47).
MONDAY'S LATE RESULTS: FA Carling Premiership: Crystal Palace 0 Wimbledon 3. Pontins League First Division: Sunderland 0 Middlesbrough 0; Wolves 3 Manchester City 1. Pontins League Cup Group One: Burnley 1 Wrexham 1. Avon Insurance Combination First Division: Luton 3 Portsmouth 1. The Times FA Youth Cup fourth round: Middlesbrough 0 Leeds 0. Screwfix Direct League Premier Division: Keynsham 0 Calne 3. Winstonlead Kent League First Division: Chatham 2 Deal 1. African Nations' Cup (Burkina Faso) Group B: Ghana 2 (Nyarko 8, Gargo 90) Tunisia 0. Group D: Morocco 1 (Bahja 37) Zambia 1 (Chiumba 81). Spanish League: Atletico Madrid 4 (Jose Mari 25, Vieri 35, 68, Paunovic 86) Oviedo 1 (Dely Valdes 86). Portuguese League: Estrela da Amadora 2 Porto 1.

Motor racing
The Tyrrell-Ford team announced yesterday that the Brazilian Ricardo Rosset will be their second driver in the Formula One World Championship this season. Rosset, 29, will join the Ford team's other driver, Tora Takagi, of Japan, for pre-season testing in Barcelona later this week.

Rugby League
Mike Forshaw, the Great Britain forward, has signed up with the Super League champions Bradford Bulls until the year 2000.

Sailing
With the whole Whitbread fleet on ice alert as they continued their high-speed fifth leg charge on a converging path to Cape Horn, the leader Paul Cayard in EF Language missed by 1.5 miles breaking Lawrie Smith's 449.1-mile world record for a 24-hour run. Smith himself quickly slumped to 155 miles behind Cayard in the cleaning up process on Silk Cut after being dismasted. But Knut Frostad, after some "very scary" sailing on Innovation Kvaerner, pushed up to fifth, ahead of Dee Smith on Chessie Racing.
WHITBREAD ROUND THE WORLD RACE Fifth leg (6,670 miles, Auckland, NZ, to Sao Sebastião, Br): 1 EF Language 3,877.2 miles to finish; 2 Swedish Match +28.2 miles; 3 Merit Cup +47.1; 4 Toshiba +48.3; 5 Innovation Kvaerner +89.2; 6 Chessie Racing +123.9; 7 Silk Cut +155.5; 8 Brunel Sunergy +168.1; 9 EF Education +780.5.

Squash
England's Del Harris, absent since November with a fractured wrist, will replace the world No 3, Jonathon Power, in the Equitable Life Super Series Finals at Hatfield from 26 February to 1 March. Power, the 23-year-old Canadian, has torn a ligament in his right ankle.

Tennis
ST PETERSBURG MEN'S OPEN Singles, first round: M Goellner (Ger) bt J A Marin (Sp) 6-4 7-5; J Van Herck (Bel) bt M Tillstrom (Swe) 3-6 6-3 6-4; F Santoro (Fr) bt A Boetsch (Fr) 7-6 6-3; O Delaître (Fr) bt J Golmard (Fr) 7-5 6-1.
DUBAI MEN'S OPEN Singles, first round: J Tarango (US) bt S Bruguera (Sp) 6-3 6-3; A Costa (Sp) bt O Burrieza (Sp) 6-4 6-3; C Costa (Sp) bt B Ulihrach (Cz Rep) 7-6 6-3; J Bjorkman (Swe) bt D Nainkin (SA) 6-1 6-3; A Berasategui (Sp) bt A Kitinov (Maced) 6-1 6-3; M Sinner (Ger) bt P Norval (SA) 7-5 6-3; B Steven (NZ) bt M Rios (Chile) 6-3 6-3; A Corretja (Sp) bt J Alonso (Sp) 6-1 6-2; B Becker (Ger) bt T Henman (GB) 7-5 6-0.
SAN JOSE MEN'S TOURNAMENT Singles, first round: M Chang (US) bt M Craca (Ger) 6-2 6-4; A Agassi (US) bt A Martin (Sp) 6-2 6-2; M Washington (US) bt R Delgado (Par) 7-5 6-2; T Haas (Ger) bt J A Viloca (Sp) 6-1 6-4; G Stafford (SA) bt R Reneberg (US) 6-4 6-2; J-M Gambill (US) bt S Sargsian (Arm) 6-3 1-6 6-4.
ATP CHALLENGER (Wolfsburg, Ger) Singles, first round (selected): A Richardson (GB) bt A Pavel (Rom) 6-3 6-1.
PARIS WOMEN'S INDOOR OPEN Singles, first round: D Van Roost (Bel) bt B Schett (Aut) 6-2 4-6 6-0; S Farina (Aut) bt D Chladkova (Cz Rep) 2-6 6-2 6-3; B Paulus (Aut) bt S Kleinova (Cz Rep) 6-3 7-5; E Loit (Fr) bt M Maleeva (Bul) 6-0 6-2; S Appelmans (Bel) bt L Neiland (Lat) 6-1 6-3; S Pitkowski (Fr) bt A-G Sidot (Fr) 6-4 6-0.
LTA WOMEN'S TOURNAMENT (Birmingham) Singles, first round: M Persson (Swe) bt J Okada (US) 7-6 6-2; J Lutrova (Rus) bt H Matthews (GB) 6-2 6-2; N Payne (GB) bt L Perkins (GB) 6-2 4-6 7-6; J Ward (GB) bt A Zaporozhanova (Ukr) 7-5 6-4.
LEADING WTA TOUR RANKINGS: 1 M Hingis (Swit) 6,007pts; 2 L Davenport (US) 4,253; 3 J Novotna (Cz Rep) 3,856; 4 M Seles (US) 2,986; 5 I Majoli (Croa) 2,854; 6 A Coetzer (SA) 2,853; 7 A Sanchez Vicario (Sp) 2,674; 8 C Martinez (Sp) 2,484; 9 M Pierce (Fr) 2,421; 10 I Spirlea (Rom) 2,343; 11 S Testud (Fr) 1,992; 12 A Huber (Ger) 1,981; 13 N Tauziat (Fr) 1,947; 14 V Williams (US) 1,696; 15 M J Fernandez (US) 1,621; 16 A Sugiyama (Japan) 1,488; 17 L Raymond (US) 1,408; 18 R Dragomir (Rom) 1,352; 19 B Schultz-McCarthy (Neth) 1,288; 20 Y Basuki (Indon) 1,287.

TODAY'S NUMBER

300,000

The number of pounds the winner of this year's Open Championship will receive – £50,000 up on the sum last year's winner, Justin Leonard, received, and the total fund 15 years ago. Every player who makes the half-way cut will receive at least £5,600, more than Lee Trevino received for winning in 1971.

WINTER OLYMPICS RESULTS

ALPINE SKIING
Men's combined slalom (after final run): 1 M Reiter (Aut) 1min 31.85sec; 2 L Kjus (Nor) 1:33.68; 3 A Bachleda (Pol) 1:34.49; 4 C Mayer (Aut) 1:35.05; 5 K A Aamodt (Nor) 1:35.26; 6 G Mader (Aut) 1:35.36; 7 F Jagge (Nor) 1:35.38; 8 H Maier (Aut) 1:35.90; 9 M Maxa (Cz Rep) 1:36.17; 10 K Ghedina (It) 1:40.35. Selected: 21 P Schwarzacher-Joyce (Irl) 1:56.22. British: A Freshwater did not finish; J Ormond dnf.

CURLING
Men's preliminary round: Japan 8 Sweden 5; Canada 11 United States 3; Switzerland 10 Great Britain 4; Norway 7 Germany 5. **Women's third preliminary round:** United States 8 Germany 5, Great Britain 6 Norway 4, Sweden 5 Denmark 4, Canada 7 Japan 4.

ICE HOCKEY
Men's preliminary round: Group A: Kazakhstan 4 Slovakia 3. Group B: Belarus 2 Japan 2.

ICE SKATING
Pairs free programme
1 O Kazakova and A Dmitriev (Rus) 1.0pt; 2 E Berezhnaya and A Sikharulidze (Rus) 2.0; 3 M Wötzel and I Steuer (Ger) 3.0; 4 K Ina and J Dungjen (US) 4.0; 5 Shen Xue and Zhao Hongbo (Ch) 5.0; 6 S Abitbol and S Bernadis (Fr) 6.0.
Overall
1 Oksana Kazakova and Artur Dmitriev (Rus) 1.5 pts
2 Elena Berezhnaya and Anton Sikharulidze (Rus) 3.5
3 Mandy Wötzel and Ingo Steuer (Ger) 4.0
4 K Ina and J Dungjen (US) 6.0; 5 Shen Xue and Zhao Hongbo (Ch) 8.0; 6 S Abitbol and S Bernadis (Fr) 9.5

LUGE
Women's singles (after second run): 1 S Niedernhuber (Ger) 1min 42.318sec; 2 S Kraushaar (Ger) 1:42.375; 3 A Neuner (Aut) 1:42.703; 4 S Erdmann (Ger) 1:42.823; 5 A Tagwerker (Aut) 1:42.853; 6 E Warren (US) 1:43.105; 7 B Calcaterra-McMahon (US) 1:43.347; 8 C Myler (United States) 1:43.448; 9 S Manzenreiter (Aut) 1:43.720; 10 G Weissensteiner (It) 1:43.742.

NORDIC SKIING
Women's 5km cross-country classical
1 Larissa Lazutina (Rus) 17min 37.9sec
2 Katerina Neumannova (Cz Rep) 17:42.7
3 Bente Martinsen (Nor) 17:49.4
4 N Gavrylyuk (Rus) 17:50.3; 5 O Danilova (Rus) 17:51.3; 6 M Mikkelsplass (Nor) 17:53.5; 7 A Moen-Guidon (Nor) 18:04.4; 8 T Dybendahl Hartz (Nor) 18:08.0; 9 G Paruzzi (It) 18:14.7; 10 B Albrecht (Swit) 18:18.5

SNOWBOARDING
Women's giant slalom (after final run)
1 Karine Ruby (Fr) 2min 17.34sec
2 Heidi Renoth (Ger) 2:19.17
3 Brigitte Koeck (Aut) 2:19.42
4 L Trettel (It) 2:19.71; 5 U Fingerlos (Aut) 2:20.36; 6 M Posch (It) 2:21.34; 7 D M Unter Der Eggen (It) 2:22.42; 8 I Zadlacher (Aut) 2:22.92; 9 S Fermand (Ger) 2:23.30; 10 M Birk (Swe) 2:23.91

SPEED SKATING
Men's 500m (after second run)
1 Hiroyasu Shimizu (Japan) 1min 11.35sec
2 Jeremy Wotherspoon (Can) 1:11.84
3 Kevin Overland (Can) 1:11.86
4 S Bouchard (Can) 1:12.00; 5 P Bouchard (Can) 1:12.05; 6 C FitzRandolph (US) 1:12.20; 7 Yoon-Man Kim (Kor) 1:12.36; 8 Kyu-Hyuk Lee (Kor) 1:12.55; 9 E Ioriatti (It) 1:12.66; 10 R Stroem (Nor) 1:12.68

Medals table

	G	S	B	Tot
Russia	3	2	0	5
Germany	1	1	3	5
Canada	1	1	1	3
Netherlands	1	1	0	2
Bulgaria	1	0	0	1
Finland	1	0	0	1
France	1	0	0	1
Japan	1	0	0	1
Italy	0	2	1	3
Norway	0	1	2	3
Czech Republic	0	1	0	1
Ukraine	0	1	0	1
Austria	0	0	1	1
Belgium	0	0	1	1
Switzerland	0	0	1	1

THE INDEPENDENT

Henry Blofeld's West Indies Update

For the latest news, views and regular updates call Henry Blofeld's cricket line on:

0930 563 597

Calls cost 50p per minute at all times.

TODAY'S FIXTURES

Football
7.30 unless stated
INTERNATIONAL FRIENDLY
England v Chile (8.0) (at Wembley stadium)
B INTERNATIONAL FRIENDLY
Rep of Ireland B v Northern Ireland (at Tolka Park, Dublin)
PRESS & JOURNAL HIGHLAND LEAGUE: Fort William v Elgin; Fraserburgh v Deveronvale.
LEAGUE OF WALES GILBERT CUP Semi-final first leg: Cwmbran v Barry.
FAI HARP LAGER CUP Second-round replay: Finn Harps v Galway.
RYMAN LEAGUE First Division: Croydon v Thame (7.45); Molesey v Billericay (7.45).
UNIBOND LEAGUE CUP Fourth round: Boston Utd v Altrincham. Uolfilia First Division Cup third round: Farsley Celtic v Lincoln Utd.
PONTINS LEAGUE Premier Division: Aston Villa v Tranmere (7.0); Birmingham v Liverpool (7.15) (at Hednesford Town); Blackburn v Preston (7.0). First Division: Bolton v Leicester (7.0); Huddersfield v Grimsby (7.0); Oldham v Port Vale (7.0); West Bromwich v Notts County (7.0) (at Halesowen Town). Second Division: Burnley v Shrewsbury (7.15); Carlisle v Rotherham (7.0) (at Gretna); Stockport v Bradford City (7.0) (at Hyde Utd); Wrexham v Barnsley (7.0); York v Lincoln City (7.0). Third Division: Doncaster v Wigan (7.0); Walsall v Scarborough (7.0); Newcastle v Bury (7.0) (at Gateshead).
AVON INSURANCE COMBINATION First Division: Brighton v Charlton (7.0) (at Worthing); Crystal Palace v Ipswich (2.0); Swindon v Southampton (7.15); Tottenham v Wimbledon (2.0) (at Leyton Orient).
THE TIMES FA YOUTH CUP Fourth round: Portsmouth v Chelsea (7.0). Fourth-round replay: Leeds Utd v Middlesbrough.

Rugby Union
ALLIED DUNBAR PREMIERSHIP ONE: Bath v Gloucester (7.15).
TENNENTS SCOTTISH PREMIERSHIP Third Division: Glenrothes v Stewart's Melville FP (7.0).
AIB IRISH LEAGUE First Division: Lansdowne v St Marys (7.0).
CLUB MATCH: Cambridge University v Army (7.15).

Ice hockey
EXPRESS CUP Semi-final first leg: Nottingham Panthers v Ayr Bruins (7.30).

Other sports
SNOOKER: Scottish Open (Aberdeen).

WEEKEND FIXTURES AND POOLS GUIDE

FA Cup fifth round
1 Aston Villa v Coventry 1
2 *Sheffield Utd v Reading V
3 Leeds v Birmingham 1
4 Newcastle v Tranmere 1
5 Wimbledon v Wolves X
Also playing: West Ham v Blackburn. Playing Sunday: Arsenal v Crystal Palace, Manchester United v Barnsley.
* Playing Friday (match void).

FA Carling Premiership
6 Everton v Derby 1
Also playing (not on coupons): Sheffield Wednesday v Liverpool; Tottenham v Leicester City.

Nationwide Football League
First Division
7 Crewe v Portsmouth 1
8 Manchester City v Bury 1
9 Middlesbrough v Bradford 1
10 Port Vale v Norwich 1
11 Stockport v Stoke X
12 West Bromwich v QPR 1
Also playing (not on coupons): Ipswich v Huddersfield.

Second Division
13 Blackpool v Millwall 1
14 Bournemouth v Chesterfield X
15 Brentford v Preston 1
16 Bristol City v Gillingham 1
17 Carlisle v Walsall 1
18 Northampton v Southend X
19 Oldham v Fulham 2
20 Plymouth v York X
21 Wigan v Grimsby 1
22 Wrexham v Bristol Rovers 2
23 Wycombe v Burnley 2
Also playing (not on coupons): Watford v Luton.

Third Division
24 Brighton v Doncaster 1
25 Darlington v Notts County 2
26 Hartlepool v Chester 2
27 Macclesfield v Leyton Orient 1
28 Rotherham v Shrewsbury 1
29 Scarborough v Exeter 1
30 Scunthorpe v Rochdale 1
31 Swansea v Peterborough 1
32 Torquay v Hull 1
Also playing (not on coupons): Barnet v Cardiff. Playing Friday: Cambridge Utd v Lincoln City, Colchester v Mansfield.

Bell's Scottish League
Second Division
33 Clydebank v Stranraer 1
34 Stenhousemuir v Brechin 1

Third Division
35 Berwick v Cowdenbeath 1
36 Queen's Park v Montrose 1
Also playing (not on coupons): First Division: Morton v Hamilton. Second Division: Clyde v Livingston. Third Division: East Stirling v Dumbarton. Tennents Scottish Cup fourth round: Ross County v Dundee; Ayr v Kilmarnock; Motherwell v Rangers; Dundee Utd v Inverness Caledonian Thistle; Hearts v Albion Rovers; Raith Rovers v Falkirk; St Johnstone v Stirling. Playing Sunday: Second Division: East Fife v Queen of the South. Playing Monday: Scottish Cup: Dunfermline v Celtic.

GM Vauxhall Conference
37 Dover v Halifax 2
38 Hayes v Yeovil X
39 Hereford v Morecambe X
40 Kidderminster v Southport 2
41 Leek v Hednesford X
42 Northwich v Slough 1
43 Telford v Welling 1
44 Woking v Kettering 1
Also playing (not on coupons): Cheltenham v Stevenage; Gateshead v Rushden.

Dr Martens League
Premier Division
45 Ashford v Halesowen Town 1
46 Burton Albion v Crawley X
47 Cambridge City v Bromsgrove 1
48 Merthyr Tydfil v Atherstone X
49 Nuneaton v Worcester 1
Four draws: Wimbledon v Wolves, Bournemouth v Chesterfield, Hayes v Yeovil, Burton Albion v Crawley.
Five aways: Fulham, Bristol Rovers, Notts County, Halifax, Southport.
Ten homes: Leeds, Newcastle, Middlesbrough, West Bromwich, Bristol City, Brighton, Clydebank, Queen's Park, Woking, Nuneaton.

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AROUND THE RESORTS

Resort	Comment	Area open	Last snow	Lwr cm	Upp cm	Forecast
ANDORRA						
Soldeu/Tarter	All runs now well pisted	95%	3.23	50	95	Sunny
AUSTRIA						
Ischgl	Some icy patches	100%	8.2	30	130	Bright and sunny
BULGARIA						
Borovets	Firm packed snow all levels	100%	5.2	60	90	Pt cloudy/snow
CANADA						
Whistler	Powdery snow on surface	100%	8.2	130	255	Sunny
FRANCE						
Meribel	Best skiing above mid-station	100%	21.1	80	130	Fine
ITALY						
Sestriere	Amfiteatro area still good	100%	20.1	50	130	Mostly sunny
NORWAY						
Voss	Dry firm-packed snow	50%	4.2	10	40	Snow showers
ROMANIA						
Poiana Brasov	Fresh snow at all levels	100%	9.2	60	80	Bright
SWEDEN						
Storlien	Firm packed powder snow	70%	3.2	15	25	Variable
SWITZERLAND						
Nendaz	Hard packed in places	100%	21.1	65	140	Clear
UNITED STATES						
Park City	Deep fresh snow	100%	9.2	185	185	Snow flurries

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Owen running hot as World Cup temperature rises

Hoddle offers debutants voyage to France via world travellers Chile

The Chilean globetrotters arrive at Wembley this evening tired of body and cold of limb. *Glenn Moore*, Football Correspondent, considers what should be the perfect start for England's World Cup countdown and Michael Owen's international career.

At the conclusion of Chile's goalless draw against New Zealand last Wednesday, the Kiwi television commentator hailed "a tremendous result" for the home team and a "very good performance". It is safe to say a similar scoreline at Wembley tonight will not be greeted with such rapture by the English press and public.

Since that match in Auckland, Chile have played in Australia and travelled half-way round the world, arriving here at 5.40am on Monday. Their bodies will still be feeling the effects of jet lag. They will also be feeling the cold. It was pushing 90 degrees in Auckland, with humidity to match and it was not much cooler in Melbourne. It may be mild for February but it could still be too chilly for Chile.

England to win then, but tonight is about more than just the result. Even a cold and weary South American side will present a cerebral challenge for English players more attuned to Premiership thud and blunder. Though Colombia will be a different proposition in the French summer heat, there are lessons for Lens to be absorbed tonight.

While the team learn about the slow-slow-slow-quick tempo of Latin American football, the coach will be learning about his players. Michael Owen and Dion Dublin are earmarked to make debuts, while Nigel Martyn will further his limited international experience and there may be first starts for Andy Cole and Nicky Butt.

Given Cole's form it would seem foolhardy not to play him and to do so in tandem with his club partner, Teddy Sheringham. Cole, at present, seems the most likely summer understudy for the recovering Alan Shearer, who may end the night where he will begin it, on the bench.

"Andy has benefited from Eric Cantona going," said Shearer of his rival. "Eric was the main man and everyone looked to him. Now things are going through Andy more. Also he has Teddy alongside and I'm fortunate to know he is excellent to play with. He creates a lot of chances for you with his great footballing brain and unselfish running."

Owen is likely to appear in the last half hour when his pace could be telling and few would bet against him continuing his run of goalscoring debuts. Dublin may be introduced alongside. While pairing two debutants may seem risky, Dublin, the elder by a decade, would appear an ideal foil and Chile are likely to be vulnerable to his height. Another option would be to bring Dublin on for Tony Adams, another who is still finding match sharpness after injury.

Adams has, however, been restored to captain. Hoddle explained he chose Paul Ince ahead of him in Rome as a series of injuries had affected both Adams' play and approach. Hoddle said: "He is a natural captain who normally concentrates 70 per cent on is own game and 30 per cent on the others. In Rome he needed to be 100 per cent on his own game. Since he went to France [for a rehabilitation period] he has regained his appetite for the game."

Paul Gascoigne, in need of match practice, should start but Paul Scholes will not be involved: a bruised knee has ruled him out. "There are more places up for grabs than people imagine," added Hoddle by way of incentive.

Chile's shape is uncertain. This is the third match in a global warm-up which even Michael Palin would blanch at and Nelson Acosta is experimenting in personnel and formation. Marcelo Salas, once a £13m target for Manchester United, has joined the Antipodean tourists from River Plate and will test England's defence, especially if Chile's playmaker, either Marcelo Vega or Jose Luis Sierra, is given time to pass.

Chile followed their goalless draw against a weak New Zealand team (who included a Woking midfielder and rejects from Barnsley and Leyton Orient) with a creditable win over Australia, the hosts' first defeat at home since Terry Venables took over. As well as Salas, Clarence Acuna, a goalscoring midfielder, and the stylish captain, Javier Margas, may catch the eye.

But most eyes will be on England whose progress is reflected in the comparison with Chile's last visit, a 0-0 draw in 1989. John Fashanu was centre-forward and 15,628 turned up. Tonight's game is almost sold out – no tickets are available on the gate – and brute force has been replaced by pace.

CHILE: Tapia; R Fuentes, Margas, Rojas, Reyes, Acuña, Galdames, Paraguez, Sierra, Salas, Barrera.

Michael Owen in training with England at Bisham Abbey on Monday
Photograph: Allsport

England expects, but precocious Owen keeps cool as a 'unique' talent is primed for senior service

Michael Owen will today become the youngest England international this century, eclipsing the record set by Duncan Edwards in 1955. *Glenn Moore* found the Liverpool forward as assured off the pitch as he is on it.

He never mumbled, never ducked a question. Michael Owen, 18 years and 59 days today, was as cool under media fire yesterday as he is in the penalty box. He looked you in the eye when answering a question and spoke thoughtfully and clearly; 18 going on 28.

Not until this evening will we know if he is ready to play a part in England's World Cup campaign but Owen is certainly able to deal with the hype that will surround it. Sitting alongside the England coach, Glenn Hoddle, at an oak-panelled Bisham Abbey he was confident but unassuming as he went through his various records as if reading a shopping list.

The most telling reply came when he was asked about his best performance. He chose a game, against Aston Villa, in which he failed to score but made two Liverpool goals. He may be famous for his goalscoring but he appears to place just as much store by creating them.

"I've always been a player that likes to get round the back and get crosses in for other people," he said. "When I first burst on to the scene people only saw the goals I was scoring but more recently they've taken notice of the goals I've set up. It is nice to be recognised for that."

Goals, however, are his stock in trade. Having scored on his debut at every England age-group, from Under-15 to Under-21, and for Liverpool (only last May) a goal tonight would not come as a surprise.

Dion Dublin, another debutant albeit a 28-year-old one, said on Monday he was nervous when he joined England's training camp. Was Owen? "I've been here twice before [training with the first team] so that helped but you'd be lying if you did not say you were nervous," he said.

"It has all come so quick. I always hoped I would be an international player but not expected it this quickly. I try to handle it as normally as possible and keep my feet on the ground. I've not had to turn to anyone for advice. If anyone's seen a problem they've had a quiet word but I've not had any big ones. My dad [the former Everton and Chester player Terry] has been a great influence. I don't think it's essential to have a dad that knows about the game but it's certainly been a help to me.

"I knew people were talking about [being called up], and my club form was good, but I never expected to be in. I was playing golf on a day off when [the Liverpool coach] Doug Livermore rang and told me.

"Personally, I feel ready. If I do well for my club and in any international games I get might have a chance of being in the World Cup squad but I don't think there is a lot of pressure on me. I've nothing to lose and I'm confident in my ability to do well.

"I don't think age comes into it. The manager said 'if you're good enough you're old enough' and I hope I come into that category."

Such perspective is invaluable. Owen is, after all, old enough to fight for his country and, if in the forces, could be heading for the Gulf. All Hoddle is asking him to do is play football for England.

Even so, his maturity will be invaluable. It is less than two years since Robbie Fowler woke to headlines that blustered "why he'll be the greatest ever" on the morning of his full England debut. Fowler, however, has since been dropped from the squad.

Hoddle, who interrupted once to veto a question about Fowler, said: "He has the right temperament to handle all this. He has that inner strength you need to play at the top level at 17, 18. David Beckham has it. All the Manchester United lads do."

Hoddle compared Owen's single-minded concentration on developing and focusing on his game to Alan Shearer and the England striker said of his young rival: "He's very special. I just hope there is not too much pressure put on him. He seems as if he can handle it but the more games he has and the longer he plays the more everyone will find out about him.

"He's fortunate to be playing for a massive club and a manager, in Roy Evans, who seems to understand him. He does not seem to be fazed by anything or anyone."

Hoddle added: "He has nothing to lose: if he doesn't make the World Cup squad he has the ability to be ready for the next one and the European Championships in 2000. I just want him to go out and express himself.

"He is unique. There are not many strikers who attack people with the ball, it is a dying art. They are usually wingers, like Ryan Giggs. A lot of people are quick but not many are as quick with ball at their feet. He has that ability to run at opponents while in possession. He also plays with his head up and players who can do that will always create goals as well as score them. Every time he got the ball in the Under-21 match against Greece he made the match come alive.

"I need to find out now if he can make the jump [to senior level]. He has not got much European or Under-21 experience. There is no pressure on him."

One lesson Hoddle and Owen hope has been learned is not to retaliate. He was sent off against Yugoslavia Under-18s and recalled: "I'd been man-marked and brought down all the time. I lost my temper and hit him in midriff as I got up for a foul. I realised it was a stupid thing to do straight away." Hoddle added: "If it happens again tomorrow we'll see if he has learned."

Owen, who has played twice before at Wembley, scoring for England schoolboys in a 4-2 defeat to Germany and a 1-0 win over Brazil, added: "I do reflect on things. I still live in Chester and the 40 minutes it takes to get into training I think about Liverpool and England. It doesn't scare me, I relish the opportunity."

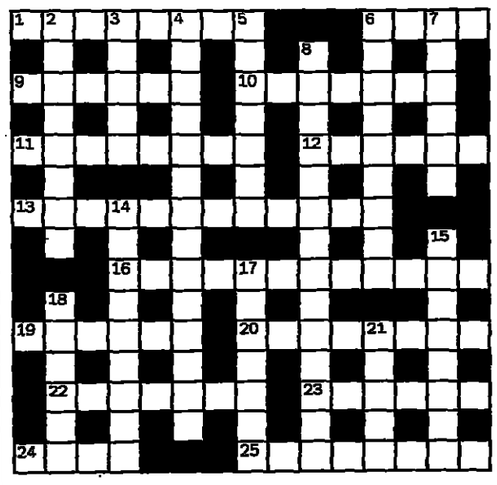
Ken Jones on England's striking options, page 28

A BRIEF HISTORY OF MICHAEL OWEN

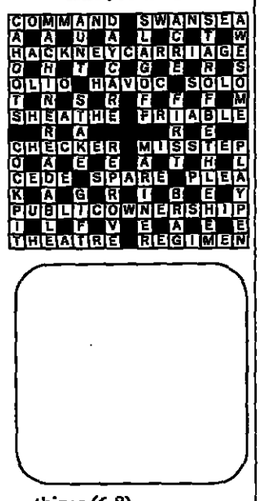
1979: Born 14 December, Chester, son of professional footballer, Terry.
1991: Breaks Ian Rush's goalscoring record for Deeside Primary Schools in North Wales.
1994: Surpasses Kevin Gallen and Nick Barmby's joint goalscoring record for England Under-15s.
1996: Signs professional forms. Helps Liverpool win FA Youth Cup.
1997: 6 May Scores on first-team debut in 2-1 defeat at Wimbledon.
9 August Starts new season in place of the injured Robbie Fowler and scores in a 1-1 draw.
6 October Trains with England squad.
1998: 2 February Called into senior England squad for friendly international against Chile.

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3531. Wednesday 11 February — By Aquila



Tuesday's Solution



ACROSS
1 Bent elbows at presentation? (8)
6 Drink, say, in platform last visited (4)
9 Involve onself with garment that is not fastened (4-2)
10 Onomatapoeic sort in city-area lift (7)
11 Variety of cabbage giving little brother nasty colic (8)
12 Subtle colour difference is not seen in plague (6)
13 Does no scales, sadly, in this period of inactivity (6,6)
16 Conserve half-sliced baguettes (6,6)
19 In the field, what is the best-known means of defence? (6)
20 One acting so uncertainly in matters of belief (8)
22 Flowers growing at height that is a record in some quarters (7)
23 Moving slowly from border (6)
24 God of noise abatement? (4)
25 Heat-source dehydrates miscellaneous things (8)

DOWN
2 Without reservation, I depend on medical speciality (8)
3 Subject of leading Olympic finalists (5)
4 Light garnish that may conceal true nature of things (6-8)
5 The main movement with the wind (3-4)
6 She sits on a tail (9)
7 Allure of authentic etchings? (6)
8 Linnets here can fly in light from the east (7-7)
14 Security-device of Peter, working endlessly in office (6-3)
15 Challenge from half-dead, engaged fellow (8)
17 Framework of church, Assisi-style? (7)
18 Ready to sail, say, with a piece of surfing equipment? (6)
21 Term of affection almost certain round Georgia (5)

©Published by Newspaper Publishing PLC, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL, and printed at Mirror Colour Print, St Albans Road, Watford
Back issues available from Historic Newspapers, 01968 840370.
Wednesday 11 February 1998 Registered as a newspaper with the Post Office

Yates' six-month ban under fire for being too lenient

Kevin Yates is to appeal after being found guilty of ear-biting and banned for six months. But for many in rugby union the real question is whether the sentence was too light. *David Llewellyn* reports.

When the South African prop, Johan Le Roux, was found guilty of biting the ear of New Zealand's Sean Fitzpatrick in July 1994, he was banned for 19 months. Not surprisingly, perhaps, Le Roux expressed some surprise yesterday when Bath's Kevin Yates, having been convicted of the same offence, was given a sentence some 13 months shorter.

"If Kevin Yates is definitely guilty then I would have expected a longer ban," Le Roux, said. "In my case I was provoked and retaliated. I was wearing a mouthguard and there were no scratches or stitches. I was banned for 19 months and for as long as I live I will feel that New Zealand treated me unfairly. It cost me a place in the World Cup winning squad and about three million rand (£375,000) in lost earnings."

Le Roux, who is on the verge of Springbok recognition again, called for worldwide unification over sentences. "The International Board should set a ban for every sort of incident, stamping, punching and of course biting, because having received a ban for defending myself I had expected whoever was responsible in this case to get two years." All the same Le Roux added: "The six-month ban does not mean he has been treated leniently. It will stay with him for ever."

Yates, 25, was found guilty of biting the ear of London Scottish's Simon Fenn in a Tetley's Bitter Cup tie last month. The incident took place following a scrum and resulted in Fenn needing 25 stitches in his ear.

The verdict was reached in the early hours of yesterday morning by a three-man Rugby Football Union disciplinary panel chaired by Michael Burton QC. It followed after some 25 hours of deliberation spread over four days. Yates maintains his innocence and has already lodged an appeal, but unless it succeeds he will be suspended until 10 July 1998 – the panel deeming that having already been banned since the offence took place on 10 January this should count towards his sentence. Yates has also been ordered to pay £23,000 costs.

As the verdict filtered out to the rugby world yesterday, there was a growing feeling that the punishment was a compromise. London Scottish had originally said they wanted a minimum 12-month ban, while others had said that two years would be too short.

Jeff Probyn, the former England prop and current RFU council member, said: "Kevin has denied it all along, but if he did it, the sentence isn't long enough. The weight of written evidence — because there was no television evidence — seems to be against him and he was found guilty. On that basis a six-month sentence seems a little bit light." Another former international prop, Scotland's David Sole, said: "If he has been told he is guilty, he shouldn't be playing the game of rugby."

However the indications yesterday were that even if his appeal fails, once the sentence is served Yates will be able to resume his career. The England coach, Clive Woodward, said: "We have to go along with the RFU decision. Quite clearly he cannot be considered for England until next season. I just hope he returns fit, in form and available to resume what looked like being a promising international career." In addition Bath hinted that they are unlikely to sack him, although they are still planning a club disciplinary hearing. That will not take place until after Yates' appeal has been heard.

Richard Yerbury, the chief executive of London Scottish, was happy with Yates' punishment but very unhappy that his club were being asked to pay some of the costs. "We have been left with a bill for, effectively, helping to police the game," he said. "Our costs are nearly double those of Kevin Yates', which is quite alarming. We think it is totally unjustified that we should be paying for that. We don't believe London Scottish should have to pay to seek justice for an innocent victim."

London Scottish have also made it clear that Fenn may still pursue a civil action for damages arising from the incident.

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